

THREE PLAYS

CRIME PASSIONNEL

MEN WITHOUT SHADOWS

THE RESPECTABLE PROSTITUTE

By the same Author

Novels

THE AGE OF REASON

THE REPRIEVE

IRON IN THE SOUL

NAUSEA

Plays

TWO PLAYS

(THE FLIES *and* IN CAMERA)

LUCIFER AND THE LORD

KEAN

NEKRASSOV

LOSER WINS

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE



THREE PLAYS

CRIME PASSIONNEL
MEN WITHOUT SHADOWS
THE RESPECTABLE PROSTITUTE

TRANSLATED FROM
THE FRENCH
BY
KITTY BLACK



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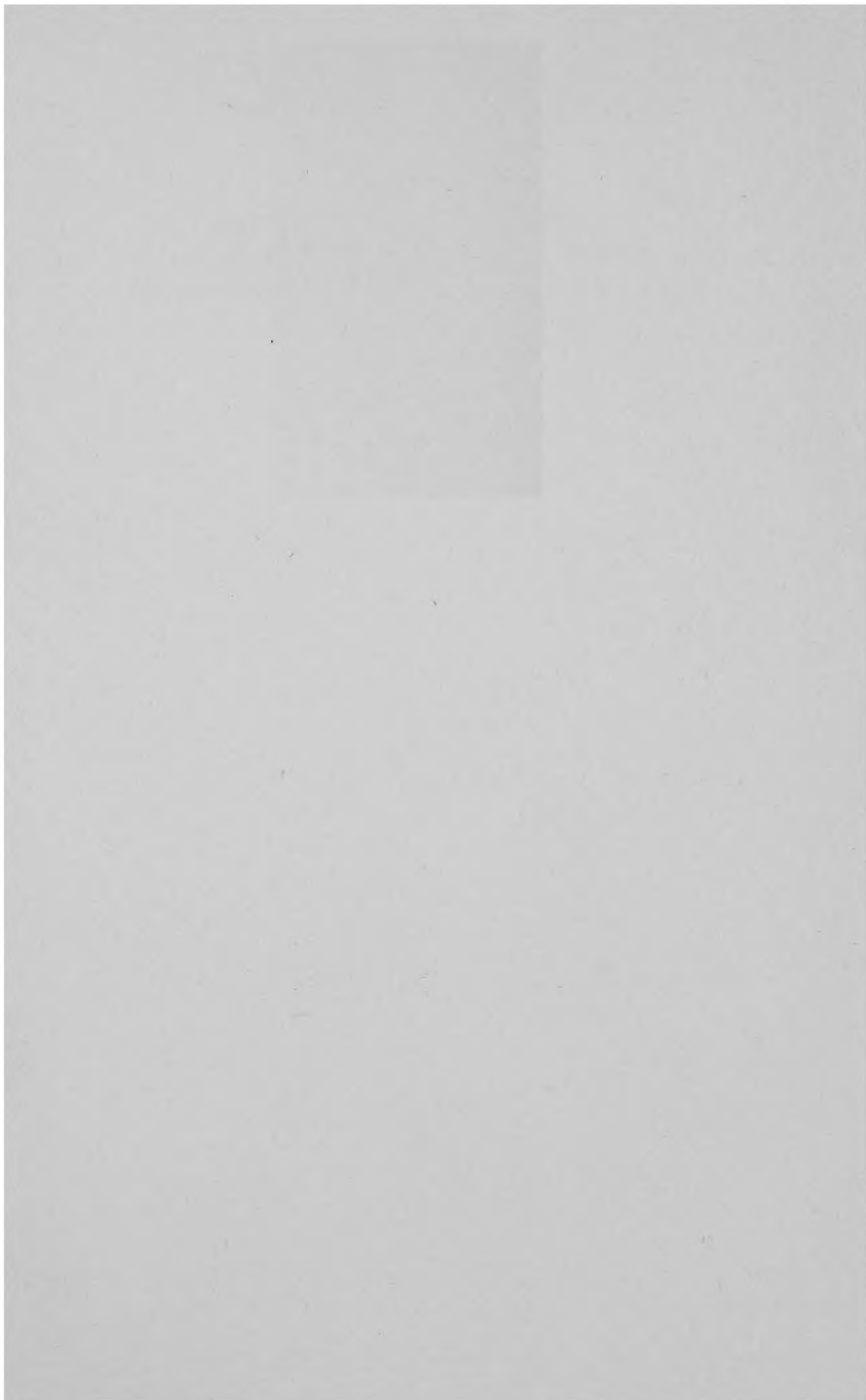
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CRIME PASSIONNEL

(Les Mains Sales)

CHARACTERS

HOEDERER, *One of the leaders of
the Proletarian Party*

HUGO

JESSICA, *Hugo's wife*

GEORGES

LEON

SLICK

} *Hoederer's bodyguard*

LOUIS

FRANZ

CHARLES

IVAN

OLGA

} *Members of the Proletarian Party*

PRINCE PAUL, *Son of the Regent of Illythia*

KARSKY, *Secretary of the Pentagon Party*

*The action of the play takes place in
Illythia, an imaginary country in
Central Europe*

CRIME PASSIONNEL was presented at the Lyric Theatre, Hammer-smith, on 16th June, 1948, with the following cast:

| | |
|-------------|---------------------------|
| HOEDERER | <i>Roger Livesey</i> |
| HUGO | <i>Michael Gough</i> |
| JESSICA | <i>Joyce Redman</i> |
| GEORGES | <i>Brian Carey</i> |
| LEON | <i>Julian Randall</i> |
| SLICK | <i>Max Brimmell</i> |
| LOUIS | <i>Raymond Westwell</i> |
| CHARLES | <i>Humphrey Heathcote</i> |
| FRANZ | <i>Gunnar Hafsten</i> |
| OLGA | <i>Yvonne Coulette</i> |
| PRINCE PAUL | <i>Ernest Clark</i> |
| KARSKY | <i>William Sherwood</i> |

The production was by Peter Glenville, and the décor by Rolf Gérard. On 4th August, the play transferred to the Garrick Theatre.

CRIME PASSIONNEL



PROLOGUE

The scene is OLGA's flat. The ground floor of a maisonette, on the main street of a town. One feels that the person who lives in this room is quite indifferent to her surroundings. On the right are a door into the hall and a window with closed shutters. On the left, towards the back, another door and a fireplace with a mantelpiece and a mirror above it. At the back there is a telephone standing on a chest of drawers.

Cars pass in the street from time to time. Traffic noises and motor-horns.

OLGA is sitting in front of the wireless, fiddling with the controls.

Static, then a fairly distinct voice.

WIRELESS. German troops are retreating along the whole front.

The Red Army has captured Kischner, forty miles from the Illythian frontier. Wherever possible, Illythian troops are refusing to engage; several detachments have already deserted to the Allies. Illythians, we know you were forced to take arms against the U.S.S.R., we know the deeply democratic feelings of the Illythian people, and we . . .

OLGA turns the knob. The voice stops. She remains motionless, her eyes fixed on space. Pause. Knock at the door. She starts.

More knocking. She goes slowly to the door. More knocking.

OLGA. Who is it?

HUGO [off]. Hugo.

OLGA. Who?

HUGO [off]. Hugo Barine.

OLGA is visibly surprised, but continues to stand in front of the door.

HUGO [off]. Don't you know my voice? Open the door. [She goes quickly to the chest of drawers, takes something out of

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a drawer with her left hand, wraps her hand in a scarf, goes to open the door, throwing it open and stepping back quickly to avoid surprise. A tall boy of 23 is standing in the doorway.] It's me. [They look at each other for a moment in silence.]

Are you surprised?

OLGA. You look so strange.

HUGO. Yes. I've changed. [Pause.] Well? Had a good look? [Pointing to the revolver hidden under the scarf.] You can put that thing away.

OLGA [without putting the revolver down]. I thought you were given five years.

HUGO. That's right—five years.

OLGA. Come in and shut the door. How did you get out? [She takes a step backwards. The gun isn't actually pointing at HUGO, but very nearly. HUGO casts an amused look at it, then slowly turns his back on OLGA and shuts the door.] Did you escape?

HUGO. Escape? I'm not crazy. They had to throw me out—by the seat of my pants. [Pause.] They released me for good conduct.

OLGA. Are you hungry?

HUGO. You'd like that, wouldn't you?

OLGA. Why?

HUGO. A man looks so harmless when he's eating. [Pause.] No, thank you—I'm neither hungry nor thirsty.

OLGA. Yes or no would have been enough.

HUGO. Don't you remember? I talk too much.

OLGA. I remember.

HUGO [looking round him]. How bare it all looks, and yet everything is still the same. My typewriter?

OLGA. Sold.

HUGO. Oh? [Pause. He looks round the room.] It's empty.

OLGA. What's empty?

HUGO [with an all-embracing gesture]. All this: the furniture looks as if it's floating in a vacuum. Back there, if I stretched out my arms, I could touch both walls of my cell. Come closer. [She doesn't move.] I had forgotten; out of prison, people live at a respectful distance. What a lot of waste space! It's funny to be free, makes you feel giddy. I'll have

PROLOGUE

to get used to talking to people with the width of a room between us.

OLGA. When did they release you?

HUGO. Just now.

OLGA. You came straight here?

HUGO. Where else could I go?

OLGA. You haven't talked to anyone?

HUGO [*looks at her and starts to laugh*]. No, I haven't. It's all right. [OLGA *relaxes a little and looks at him*.] Are you glad to see me?

OLGA. I don't know. [*A car passes. The horn sounds. HUGO shivers. The car drives past. OLGA watches him coldly*.] If you really have been released, you don't have to be afraid.

HUGO [*ironically*]. Think so? [*He shrugs his shoulders. Pause*.] How's Louis?

OLGA. All right.

HUGO. And Laurent?

OLGA. He—he had bad luck.

HUGO. I thought so. I don't know why, I always thought of him as being dead. There must be plenty of changes?

OLGA. It's all much more difficult. The Germans are here.

HUGO [*indifferently*]. Oh? Since when?

OLGA. Three months. Five divisions. They were supposed to be going through on their way to Hungary. But they just stayed.

HUGO. Oh? You must have quite a few new members?

OLGA. Yes. Recruiting isn't done in quite the old way. There are gaps to fill; we are . . . we have become less strict.

HUGO. Yes, of course; you've got to adapt yourselves. [*With slight anxiety*.] But, essentially, things are still the same?

OLGA [*embarrassed*]. Well . . . broadly speaking, naturally.

HUGO. Anyway, you're still alive. It's difficult to realize, in prison, that other people go on living. Do you ever talk about me?

OLGA [*lying badly*]. Sometimes.

HUGO. The boys come on their bicycles, at night, like we used to do. They sit round the table. Louis fills his pipe and someone says: it was a night like this that the kid volunteered for a special mission?

OLGA. Something like that.

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HUGO. And then you say: he did a good job. He did it cleanly, without compromising anyone.

OLGA. Yes, yes, yes.

HUGO. Sometimes the rain used to wake me up. I used to say to myself: maybe tonight they'll be talking about me. It was my main advantage over the dead; I could still think you were thinking of me. [OLGA takes his arm with an involuntary and awkward movement. They look at each other. OLGA drops his arm. HUGO stiffens a little.] Then, one day, you said to each other: he's still got three years to go and when he comes out . . . [changing his tone without taking his eyes off OLGA] . . . and when he comes out, by way of reward, we'll shoot him down like a dog.

OLGA [recoiling abruptly]. Are you crazy?

HUGO [Pause]. Did they make you send me the chocolates?

OLGA. What chocolates?

HUGO. Liqueur chocolates, in a pink box. For six months I used to get parcels regularly from someone called Reich. I didn't know anyone of that name, so I knew the parcels came from you and I was glad. They stopped coming, and I thought: they have forgotten me. Three months ago, a parcel arrived, from the same sender, with chocolates and cigarettes. I smoked the cigarettes, and my next-door neighbour ate the sweets. The poor chap was very ill. Very ill indeed. Then I knew you hadn't forgotten me after all.

OLGA. Hoederer had friends who couldn't have been very fond of you.

HUGO. They wouldn't have waited two years to let me know. No, Olga, I had plenty of time to think it all out, and I could only find one explanation. At first, the Party thought I might still be useful. Afterwards, they changed their minds.

OLGA [without hardness]. You talk too much, Hugo. Far too much. You don't feel alive unless you're talking.

HUGO. I talk too much. I know too much, and you've never trusted me. That's all there is to it. [Pause.] I don't blame you, you know.

OLGA. Hugo, look at me. Do you really believe what you're saying? [She looks at him.] Yes, you do. [Violently.] Then why come here to me? Why, why?

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HUGO. Because you would never be able to shoot me. [*He looks at the revolver she is still holding and smiles.*] At least, that's what I thought. [OLGA angrily throws the revolver and scarf on the table.] You see?

OLGA. Listen, Hugo, I don't believe a word of your story, and I've had no orders. But if ever I do, you'd better know that I would do as I was told. And if someone from the Party questioned me, I'd tell them you were here, even if I knew they'd shoot you down in front of me. Have you any money?

HUGO. No.

OLGA. I'll give you some. Then you must go.

HUGO. Where? Skulk in the side streets, or on the docks? The water is cold, Olga. No matter what happens, it is warm here, and there are lights. It would be more comfortable to end here.

OLGA. Hugo, I shall do as the Party orders. I swear I'll carry out their orders.

HUGO. You see it's true.

OLGA. Get out of here.

HUGO. No. [*Imitating OLGA.*] 'I'll carry out their orders.' You've some surprises coming to you. With the best will in the world, what you do is never what the Party orders. 'Go to Hoederer and fire three shots into his stomach.' That's clear enough, isn't it? I went to Hoederer, and I fired three shots into his stomach. But it was all quite different. Orders—there were no orders. Up to a point, it's easy, then there are no more orders. The orders were left behind. I had to go on alone, I killed all alone and . . . and I don't even know why any more. I wish the Party would order you to shoot me. Just to see what would happen. Just to see.

OLGA. You'll see. [*Pause.*] What are you going to do now?

HUGO. I don't know. I hadn't thought. When they opened the prison gates I thought I'd come here, and I came.

OLGA. Where is Jessica?

HUGO. With her father. She wrote to me sometimes, in the beginning. I don't think she's using my name any more.

OLGA. What do you expect me to do with you? Some of the boys come here every day. They come and go as they please.

HUGO. Do they use your bedroom too?

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OLGA. No.

HUGO. Then I'll go in there. There was a red coverlet on the divan, the wallpaper had a pattern of yellow and green diamonds. There were two photographs on the wall. One was of me.

OLGA. Taking an inventory?

HUGO. No, I'm remembering. I thought about it a lot. The second photo gave me something to worry about: I couldn't remember whose it was.

A car passes in the street. He starts. They are both silent. The car stops. A door slams. Someone knocks at the door.

OLGA. Who is it?

CHARLES [off]. Charles.

HUGO [in a whisper]. Who's Charles?

OLGA [whispering]. One of us.

HUGO [looking at her]. Well?

A very short pause. CHARLES knocks again.

OLGA. Well, what are you waiting for? Go into my room. You can check up on your souvenirs.

HUGO goes out. OLGA opens the door. CHARLES and FRANZ are there.

CHARLES. Where is he?

OLGA. Who?

CHARLES. You know. We've been trailing him since he left the jug. [Brief silence.] Isn't he here?

OLGA. Yes, he's here.

CHARLES. Where?

OLGA. In there. [She points to her room.]

CHARLES. Good.

He makes a sign to FRANZ to follow him, puts his hand in his pocket and takes a step forward. OLGA bars the way.

OLGA. No.

CHARLES. It won't be long, Olga. If you like, take a walk outside. When you get back, you won't find anyone, and no traces either. [Meaning FRANZ.] That's what he's here for.

OLGA. No.

CHARLES. Let me get on with the job, Olga.

OLGA. Did Louis send you?

CHARLES. Yes.

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OLGA. Where is he?

CHARLES. In the car.

OLGA. Go and fetch him. [CHARLES *hesitates*.] I told you to go and fetch him.

CHARLES *makes a sign and FRANZ disappears*. OLGA and CHARLES remain facing each other, in silence. OLGA, without taking her eyes off CHARLES, picks up the scarf wrapped round the revolver. FRANZ returns with LOUIS.

LOUIS. What's the matter? Why are you interfering?

OLGA. You're in too much of a hurry.

LOUIS. Too much of a hurry?

OLGA. Send them away.

LOUIS. Wait for me outside. If I call, come back. [*The MEN go out.*] Well now, what do you want to say to me?

OLGA [*gently*]. Louis, he worked for us.

LOUIS. Don't be a baby, Olga. He's a dangerous type. He must be made to keep his mouth shut.

OLGA. He won't talk.

LOUIS. He's the bloodiest talker . . .

OLGA. He won't talk.

LOUIS. I wonder if you really see him as he is. You've always had a crush on him.

OLGA. And you've always been against him. [*Pause.*] Louis, I didn't ask you to come here to discuss my feelings, I'm talking in the interests of the Party. We've lost so many people since the Germans came. We can't allow ourselves to lose this boy without even finding out if he's fit for salvage.

LOUIS. Fit for salvage? He's an undisciplined little anarchist, an intellectual who thought of nothing but taking up attitudes, a bourgeois who worked when he felt like it, and dropped the whole thing for a yes or a no.

OLGA. And yet, when he was twenty, he killed Hoederer in the midst of his bodyguard, and camouflaged a political assassination as a *crime passionnel*.

LOUIS. Was it really a political assassination? That's never been properly cleared up.

OLGA. Exactly; we ought to clear it up now.

LOUIS. The whole story stinks; I wouldn't touch it with a barge-pole. Anyway, I've no time to make him pass examinations.

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OLGA. I have. [*Movement from LOUIS.*] Louis, I'm afraid you may be putting too much personal feeling into this affair.

LOUIS. I'm afraid you may be making the same mistake.

OLGA. Have you ever known me give way to my feelings? I don't ask you to let him live unconditionally. I don't give a damn for his life. All I say is that before you wipe him out we ought to find out if he can be readmitted to the Party.

LOUIS. The Party could never admit him again. Not now. You know that as well as I do.

OLGA. He worked under an assumed name. No one besides ourselves knows him now. Are you afraid he'll talk too much? If he is properly looked after, he won't talk. You say he is an intellectual and an anarchist? Maybe, but he's a desperate man too. If he is properly used, he could become the main-spring of all sorts of jobs. He has proved it once.

LOUIS. What do you suggest?

OLGA. What's the time?

LOUIS. Nine o'clock.

OLGA. Come back at midnight. I'll find out why he shot Hoederer, and what sort of man he has become. If I think he can work with us again, I'll tell you through the door, you'll leave him alone tonight, and come back and give him his orders tomorrow.

LOUIS. And if he's not fit for salvage?

OLGA. I'll open the door.

LOUIS. A lot to risk for very little.

OLGA. Where's the risk? You've got men round the house?

LOUIS. Four.

OLGA. Keep them there. [*LOUIS doesn't move.*] Louis, he worked for us in the past. We must give him a chance.

LOUIS. All right. I'll be back at midnight.

He goes out. OLGA goes to the bedroom door and opens it. HUGO comes out.

HUGO. It was your sister.

OLGA. What?

HUGO. The other photo. It was your sister. [*Pause.*] You've taken mine down. [*OLGA doesn't reply. He looks at her.*]

You're looking rather strange. What did they want?

OLGA. They were looking for you.

PROLOGUE

HUGO. Oh. Did you tell them I was here?

OLGA. Yes.

HUGO. I see. [*He makes a move to go.*]

OLGA. It's a fine night and there are men round the house.

HUGO. Oh? [*He sits at the table.*] Give me something to eat.

OLGA *fetches a plate, bread and ham. While she is arranging the plate and food in front of him he speaks.*

I was quite right about your room. I remembered everything. Everything was just as I remembered it. [*Pause.*] When I was in jail, I used to think: it's all a memory. Now the real room is there, on the other side of the wall. I've been into it. I looked at your room and it didn't seem any more real than it did in my memory. The cell too, that was all a dream. And Hoederer's eyes, the day I shot him. Do you think I'll ever wake up? Maybe when your friends come with their pop-guns . . .

OLGA. They won't touch you while you're here.

HUGO. You talked them into that? [*He pours out a glass of wine.*] I'll have to go out some time.

OLGA. Wait. You have the night. All sorts of things can happen in a night.

HUGO. What do you expect can happen?

OLGA. Things could change.

HUGO. What?

OLGA. You. Me.

HUGO. You?

OLGA. It depends on you.

HUGO [*He laughs, looks at her, and shrugs his shoulders.*] Well?

OLGA. Why don't you come back to us?

HUGO [*laughing again*]. Hell of a fine time to ask me that.

OLGA. But supposing it were possible? Supposing everything happened because of a misunderstanding? Haven't you ever wondered what you'd do, when you got out of prison?

HUGO. No.

OLGA. What did you think about?

HUGO. About what I did. I tried to understand why I did it.

OLGA. And did you? [*HUGO shrugs his shoulders.*] How did it all happen, you and Hoederer? Was it true he was hanging around Jessica?

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HUGO. Yes.

OLGA. Then you were jealous?

HUGO. I don't know. I . . . I don't think so.

OLGA. Tell me.

HUGO. What?

OLGA. Everything. From the beginning.

HUGO. It won't be difficult; it's a story I know by heart; I used to go over it every day in prison. But what it all means, that's something else. If you look at it from a distance, it holds together after a fashion; but if you try to analyse it, it blows up in your face. The fact remains I fired the shots . . .

OLGA. Begin at the beginning.

HUGO. The beginning? You know it as well as I do. Anyway, was there ever a beginning? You can begin the story in March '43, when Louis sent for me. Or you can begin it the year before when I joined the Party. Or before that, when I was born. Anyway, let's take it that the whole thing began in March 1943. . . .

As he is talking the lights dim down little by little.

CURTAIN

SCENE ONE

The scene is OLGA's flat, two years earlier. It is night. Through the door at the back, can be heard the sound of voices, a murmur that grows and fades, as though several people were talking vehemently.

HUGO is typing. He seems much younger than in the preceding scene. IVAN is walking up and down.

IVAN. I say!

HUGO. Eh?

IVAN. Can't you stop typing?

HUGO. Why?

SCENE ONE

IVAN. Makes me nervous.

HUGO. You don't look the nervous type.

IVAN. Don't suppose so. Just now, it upsets me. Couldn't you talk to me?

HUGO [*delighted*]. Of course. What's your name?

IVAN. My pseudonym's Ivan. What's yours?

- HUGO. Raskolnikoff

IVAN [*laughing*]. That's a name and a half.

HUGO. It's my Party name.

IVAN. Where did you dig that one up?

- HUGO. It's the name of a chap in a book.

IVAN. What did he do?

HUGO. He killed someone.

IVAN. Oh! Have you killed someone?

HUGO. No. [*Pause.*] Who sent you here?

IVAN. Louis.

HUGO. What did he tell you to do?

IVAN. Wait until ten o'clock.

HUGO. And then?

Gesture from IVAN to show that HUGO mustn't ask him. Sound of voices from the adjoining room. It sounds like an argument.

IVAN. What the hell are they up to, in there?

Gesture from HUGO, imitating IVAN, to show that he mustn't be questioned.

HUGO. Trouble is, this conversation can't get very far. [*Pause.*]

IVAN. Been with the Party long?

HUGO. Since '42, just about a year. I joined when the Regent declared war on the U.S.S.R. . . . What about you?

IVAN. Can't remember. Suppose I've always been a member. [*Pause.*] Are you the one who prints the newspapers?

HUGO. I and others.

IVAN. It comes my way quite often, but I don't read it. It's not your fault, but your news is always a week behind Moscow Radio or the B.B.C.

HUGO. What do you expect? We get our news by listening to the radio, like everyone else.

IVAN. I'm not complaining. You do your job—that's all there is to it. [*Pause.*] What's the time?

HUGO. Five to ten. [*IVAN yawns.*] What's the matter?

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IVAN. Nothing.

HUGO. Don't you feel well?

IVAN. I'm all right. I'm always like this *before*.

HUGO. Before what?

IVAN. Before nothing. [*Pause.*] When I'm on my bike, I feel better. [*Pause.*] I feel such a harmless chap. I wouldn't hurt a fly. [*He yawns.*]

OLGA *comes in by the front door. She puts a suitcase down near the door.*

OLGA [*to IVAN*]. There you are. Will it fit on your carrier?

IVAN. Let's see. Yes, that's okay.

OLGA. It's ten o'clock. Off you go. You've been told about the road-block and the house?

IVAN. Yes.

OLGA. Good luck.

IVAN. [*Pause.*] Aren't you going to kiss me?

OLGA. Of course. [*She kisses him on both cheeks.*]

IVAN [*goes to pick up the suitcase, then turns round in the doorway and jokingly to HUGO*]. So long, Raskolnikoff.

HUGO [*smiling*]: Go to hell.

IVAN *goes out.*

OLGA. You shouldn't have told him to go to hell.

HUGO. Why not?

OLGA. You shouldn't say such things.

HUGO [*surprised*]. You aren't superstitious, are you?

OLGA [*annoyed*]. Of course not.

HUGO [*He looks at her carelessly.*] What's he going to do?

OLGA. You don't have to know.

HUGO. He's going to blow up the bridge at Korsk.

OLGA. Why do you want me to tell you? In case of accidents, the less you know, the better.

HUGO. But you know what he's going to do?

OLGA [*shrugging her shoulders*]. Oh, I . . .

HUGO. Of course; you'd hold your tongue. You're like Louis; they could kill you before you'd speak. [*Short silence.*] What proof have you that I would talk? How can you trust me if you don't put me to the test?

OLGA. The Party isn't a set of evening classes. We don't try and test you. We try and use you to the best advantage.

SCENE ONE

HUGO [*pointing to the typewriter*]. And that's my advantage?

OLGA. Would you know how to unbuckle railway-lines?

HUGO. No.

OLGA. Well? [*Pause. HUGO looks at himself in the mirror.*]
Admiring yourself?

HUGO. I'm looking to see if I'm like my father. [*Pause.*] If I had a moustache, you couldn't tell us apart.

OLGA [*shrugging her shoulders*]. So what?

HUGO. I don't like my father.

OLGA. We know.

HUGO. He said to me: 'In my young days, I belonged to a revolutionary group too. I wrote articles for their paper. You'll get over it, as I did . . .'

OLGA. Why are you telling me this?

HUGO. For no reason. I think of it every time I look in a mirror, that's all.

OLGA [*looking at the door of the meeting-place*]. Is Louis in there?

HUGO. Yes.

OLGA. And Hoederer?

HUGO. I don't know him, but I suppose so. Who exactly is he?

OLGA. He was a member of the Landstag before it was dissolved. Now he's the secretary of the Party.

HUGO. They're making enough noise in there. Sounds as if they're quarrelling.

OLGA. Hoederer called a committee meeting to vote on a proposition.

HUGO. What proposition?

OLGA. I don't know. All I know is that Louis is against it.

HUGO [*smiling*]. Well, if he's against it, so am I. No need to know what it's all about. [*Pause.*] Olga, you've got to help me.

OLGA. What about?

HUGO. To convince Louis he must let me take part in a direct action. I'm sick of doing nothing but write while the boys are risking their lives.

OLGA. You run risks too.

HUGO. It's not the same. [*Pause.*] Olga, I don't want to go on living.

OLGA. Really? Why?

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HUGO. Too difficult.

OLGA. You're married, aren't you?

HUGO. Bah!

OLGA. Don't you love your wife?

HUGO. Yes, of course. [*Pause.*] A chap who doesn't want to live should be useful, if one knew how to use him. [*Pause. Shouts and murmurs from the room where the meeting is being held.*]
Seems to be going badly in there.

OLGA [*worried*]. Very badly.

The door opens, LOUIS comes out with two men, who quickly cross to the front door, open it and exit.

LOUIS. It's over.

OLGA. Where's Hoederer?

LOUIS. Went out the back way with Boris and Lucas.

OLGA. Well?

LOUIS [*shrugs his shoulders without replying. Pause.*] The bastards!

OLGA. Have you voted?

LOUIS. Yes. [*Pause.*] He's authorized to open negotiations. Next time he arrives with definite offers, he'll get his own way.

OLGA. When's your next meeting?

LOUIS. In ten days' time. Gives us a week. [*OLGA points at HUGO.*]
What? Oh yes. . . . Are you still here? [*He looks at HUGO and repeats, absentmindedly.*] Still here . . . [*HUGO makes a movement to go.*] Wait a minute. I may have a job for you. [*To OLGA.*] You know him better than I do. How good is he?

OLGA. He'll get by.

LOUIS. You don't think he'd crack up?

OLGA. I'm sure not. He's more likely to . . .

LOUIS. What?

OLGA. Nothing. He's all right.

LOUIS. Okay. [*Pause.*] Ivan gone?

OLGA. Quarter of an hour ago.

LOUIS. We've got a ringside seat; we'll hear the explosion. [*Pause. He comes back to HUGO.*] They tell me you're asking for action?

HUGO. Yes.

LOUIS. Why?

SCENE ONE

HUGO. I'm like that.

LOUIS. Fine. Trouble is, you don't know how to do anything with your ten fingers.

HUGO. In Russia, at the end of the last century, there were chaps who watched for the arrival of some grand-duke, with a bomb in their pockets. The bomb went off, blew the grand-duke to hell, and the poor chap with him. I can do that.

LOUIS. They were anarchists. You dream about them, because that's what you are, an intellectual anarchist. You're fifty years behind the times.

HUGO. Then I'm an incompetent.

LOUIS. In that line of country, yes.

HUGO. Okay.

LOUIS. Wait. [*Pause.*] I may perhaps find a job for you.

HUGO. A real job? You'd really trust me?

LOUIS. We'll see. Sit down. [*Pause.*] Here's the situation; on one side we've got the Fascist government of the Regent with its political line based on the Axis; on the other side is our Party, fighting for liberty and a classless society. Between the two, the Pentagon representing the liberal bourgeoisie and the nationalists. Three groups with irreconcilable interests, three groups of men who hate each other. [*Pause.*] Hoederer called this meeting tonight because he wants the Proletarian Party to join with the Fascists and the Pentagon, and form a Coalition Government to take power after the war. What d'you say to that?

HUGO [*smiling*]. You're pulling my leg.

LOUIS. Why?

HUGO. Because it's ridiculous.

LOUIS. That's what we've been discussing for the last three hours. What would *you* do if the majority had declared itself in *favour* of this reconciliation?

HUGO. Are you asking me seriously?

LOUIS. Yes.

HUGO. I left my family and my friends the day I understood the meaning of the word oppression. In no circumstances would I agree to compromise with them. [*Pause.*] The whole thing's a joke, surely?

LOUIS. The Committee accepted Hoederer's proposition by four

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votes to three. In the coming week, Hoederer will meet the Regent's emissaries.

HUGO. Has he been bribed?

LOUIS. I don't know and I don't give a damn. *Objectively*, he's a traitor. That's enough for me.

HUGO. But, Louis . . . I mean, I don't know, but . . . but it's absurd. The Regent hates us, he sets traps for us, he's fighting against the U.S.S.R. alongside Germany, he's had our people shot. How could he . . . ?

LOUIS. The Regent has lost his belief in the victory of the Axis; he wants to save his skin. If the Allies win, he wants to be able to say he was playing a double game.

HUGO. But our boys . . .

LOUIS. The whole of the P.A.C., which I represent, is against Hoederer. But you know what it is; the Proletarian Party was born from the fusion of the P.A.C. and the Social-democrats. The Social-democrats voted for Hoederer, and they're in the majority.

HUGO. Why did they . . . ?

LOUIS. Because Hoederer frightens them. . . .

HUGO. Can't we get rid of them?

LOUIS. A party split? Impossible. [*Pause.*] Hugo, are you really with us?

HUGO. You and Olga have taught me all I know, and I owe you everything. For me, you are the Party.

LOUIS [*to OLGA*]. Does he believe what he says?

OLGA. Yes.

LOUIS. Fine. [*To HUGO.*] You understand the situation; we can neither walk out, nor force this through the committee. But it's nothing more nor less than one of Hoederer's manœuvres. Without Hoederer, we've got the others in our pockets. [*Pause.*] Last Tuesday, Hoederer asked the Party to find him a secretary. A married student.

HUGO. Why married?

LOUIS. I don't know. You married?

HUGO. Yes.

LOUIS. Well then? You accept? [*They look at each other a moment.*]

HUGO [*with conviction*]. Yes.

SCENE ONE

LOUIS. Very good. You'll leave tomorrow, with your wife. He's living twenty miles away, in a country house some friend has lent him. He lives with three thugs who're there in case of accidents. You've only got to watch him; we'll make contact with you as soon as you arrive. He mustn't be allowed to meet the Regent's envoys. Or, at least, he mustn't meet them twice. Understand?

HUGO. Yes.

LOUIS. The night we give you the word, you'll open the door to three comrades who'll do the job. They'll have a car, and you can get away with your wife while they're at it.

HUGO. So that's it! That's all it is. Is that all you think me capable of?

LOUIS. Don't you agree?

HUGO. No. Not in the least. I don't want to be your cat's-paw. We intellectuals have our pride too, you know. We can't take on just any kind of job.

OLGA. Hugo!

HUGO. Now listen to me. Here's my proposal. No contacts, no spying. I'll do the job myself.

LOUIS. You?

HUGO. Yes.

LOUIS. It's too tough for an amateur.

HUGO. Your three killers may run into Hoederer's bodyguard; they might quite easily be killed. If I'm his secretary, and if I win his confidence, I'll be alone with him several hours a day.

LOUIS [*hesitatingly*]. I don't . . .

OLGA. Louis!

LOUIS. Well?

OLGA [*gently*]. Trust him. He's a kid looking for a break. He won't let you down.

LOUIS. Are you going bail for him?

OLGA. Certainly.

LOUIS. Very well. Now listen . . .

Dull explosion in the distance.

OLGA. He's done it!

LOUIS. Put out the light.

They put out the lights and open the window. Far away, the glow of a fire.

CRIME PASSIONNEL

OLGA. It's burning nicely. Very nicely. Quite a bonfire. He's brought it off.

They are all at the window.

HUGO. He's brought it off. Before the week's out, you'll both be here, on a night like this, waiting for news. You'll be worried, and you'll talk of me, and I'll be important to you. You'll be wondering: how has he got on? Then the telephone will ring, or someone will knock at the door, and you'll smile, as you're smiling now, and you'll say: 'He's brought it off. . . .'

CURTAIN

SCENE TWO

The studio.

This is a self-contained building in the garden of the villa belonging to Hoederer.

A bed, cupboards, armchairs, chairs. Female garments scattered all over the furniture, the bed covered with suitcases.

JESSICA is unpacking. She looks out of the window, then goes to a closed suitcase standing in a corner (initials H.B.), pulls it down-stage, takes a look out of the window again, goes to a man's suit hanging in a cupboard, searches through it quickly, finds something she looks at, with her back to the audience, glances again at the window. She shuts the suitcase quickly, puts the key back in the pocket of the jacket, and hides under the mattress the objects she was holding in her hand.

HUGO enters.

HUGO. I thought they were never going to stop. Were you bored without me?

JESSICA. Horribly.

HUGO. What did you do with yourself?

JESSICA. I've been to sleep.

SCENE TWO

HUGO. You can't have been bored if you were asleep.

JESSICA. I dreamed I was bored and woke myself up, so I unpacked. [*She gestures to the clothes piled pell-mell on the bed and the chairs.*]

HUGO. So I see.

JESSICA. What's he like?

HUGO. Who?

JESSICA. Hoederer.

HUGO. Hoederer? Very ordinary.

JESSICA. How old is he?

HUGO. Between two ages.

JESSICA. Which two?

HUGO. Twenty and sixty.

JESSICA. Is he tall or short?

HUGO. Middling.

JESSICA. Any distinguishing marks?

HUGO. A livid scar, a glass eye and a wig.

JESSICA. You're teasing me and trying to be clever. You know quite well you couldn't describe him.

HUGO. Yes, I could.

JESSICA. No, you couldn't. What colour are his eyes?

HUGO. Grey.

JESSICA. Honey-bee, you think everyone's eyes are grey. People have blue eyes, brown eyes, green eyes, black eyes. Some people even have mauve eyes. What colour are mine? [*She hides her eyes with her hand.*] Don't look.

HUGO. Blue.

JESSICA. You looked.

HUGO. No, I didn't. You told me this morning.

JESSICA. Idiot. [*She goes up to him.*] Hugo—try and remember. Has he got a moustache?

HUGO. No. [*Pause. Firmly.*] I'm sure he hasn't.

JESSICA [*sadly*]. I wish I could believe you.

HUGO [*thinks hard, then asserts*]. He was wearing a spotted tie.

JESSICA. Spotted?

HUGO. With spots.

JESSICA. Bah!

HUGO. The kind . . . [*he makes the gesture of tying a bow-tie.*]
You know.

CRIME PASSIONNEL

JESSICA. I knew it! I knew it! All the time he was talking to you
—you looked at his tie. Hugo—he frightened you!

HUGO. Of course he didn't!

JESSICA. He frightened you!

HUGO. He isn't frightening.

JESSICA. Then why did you look at his tie?

HUGO. I didn't want to frighten him.

JESSICA. I see. All right, honey-bee. I'll look at him, and when you
want to know what he's like, just ask me. What did he say?

HUGO. I told him my father was vice-president of the Tosk Coal
Mines, and we quarrelled when I joined the Party.

JESSICA. What did he say?

HUGO. Fine.

JESSICA. And then?

HUGO. I told him quite frankly I had taken my degree, but I
made him understand I wasn't an intellectual—that I wasn't
ashamed to work as a copyist; that I made it a point of
honour to conform to obedience and the strictest discipline.

JESSICA. And what did he say to that?

HUGO. Fine.

JESSICA. And that took you two hours?

HUGO. There were pauses.

JESSICA. You always tell me what you say to other people, but
never what other people say to you.

HUGO. That's because I think you're more interested in me than
in other people.

JESSICA. Of course, my darling. But I know you already. I don't
know the others.

HUGO. Do you want to know Hoederer?

JESSICA. I want to know everybody.

HUGO. Hum! He's common.

JESSICA. How do you know? You never looked at him.

HUGO. You've got to be common to wear spotted ties.

JESSICA. The Greek empresses slept with their barbarian
generals.

HUGO. There weren't any Empresses in Greece.

JESSICA. There were in Byzantium.

HUGO. There were barbarian generals and Greek empresses in
Byzantium, but we have no record of what they did together.

SCENE TWO

JESSICA. What else could they do? [*A tiny pause.*] Did he ask you what I was like?

HUGO. No.

JESSICA. You wouldn't have been able to tell him, anyway. You don't know.

HUGO. No. Besides it's too late for you to worry about him.

JESSICA. Why?

HUGO. You'll hold your tongue?

JESSICA. With both hands.

HUGO. He's going to die.

JESSICA. Is he ill?

HUGO. No, but he's going to be assassinated. Like all political figures.

JESSICA. Oh. [*Pause.*] What about you, honey-bee? Are you a political figure too?

HUGO. Certainly.

JESSICA. And what should the widow of a political figure do?

HUGO. She joins her husband's party and carries on his work.

JESSICA. Heavens! I'd rather kill myself on his grave.

HUGO. That isn't done nowadays, except in Malabar.

JESSICA. All right, then this is what I'll do. I'll go to your assassins, one by one. I'll make them fall madly in love with me, and when they finally think they can console my haughty and grieving spirit, I'll plunge a knife into their black hearts.

HUGO. Which would you enjoy more? Killing them or seducing them?

JESSICA. You're stupid and vulgar.

HUGO. Are we playing or not?

JESSICA. We're not playing any more. Let me unpack.

HUGO. Don't bother about it now.

JESSICA. It's all done, except yours. Give me the keys.

HUGO. I gave them to you.

JESSICA [*pointing to the suitcase she opened at the beginning of the scene*]. Not that one.

HUGO. I'll unpack it myself.

JESSICA. That's not your job, my soul.

HUGO. Since when is it yours? Are you playing at being domesticated?

JESSICA. You're playing at being a revolutionary.

CRIME PASSIONNEL

HUGO. Revolutionaries don't need domesticated women.

JESSICA. Revolutionaries prefer brunettes, like your beloved Olga.

HUGO. Jealous?

JESSICA. I'd like it to be. I've never played at that. Shall we play it now?

HUGO. If you like.

JESSICA. All right. Give me the key!

HUGO. Never!

JESSICA. What's in that suitcase?

HUGO. A shameful secret.

JESSICA. What secret?

HUGO. I am not the son of my father.

JESSICA. How delighted you would be, my angel! But it's impossible, you look too much like him.

HUGO. It's not true! Jessica! Do you really think I'm like him?

JESSICA. Are we playing or not?

HUGO. We're playing.

JESSICA. Open that case.

HUGO. I have sworn never to open it.

JESSICA. It's stuffed with letters from your love—or maybe photographs? Open it!

HUGO. Never!

JESSICA. Open it, open it!

HUGO. No, no and no.

JESSICA. You're playing?

HUGO. Yes.

JESSICA. All right, pax. I'm not playing any more. Open it.

HUGO. Non pax. I shan't.

JESSICA. I don't mind. I know what's in it.

HUGO. What?

JESSICA. This . . . this . . . [*She puts her hand under the mattress, then holds her hands behind his back and flourishes the photographs.*] These!

HUGO. Jessica!

JESSICA [*triumphantly*]. I found the key in your blue suit. I know who is your mistress, your princess, your empress. It isn't me, it isn't your brunette, it's you yourself, my darling, it's you yourself. Twelve photographs of yourself in your case.

SCENE TWO

HUGO. Give them back.

JESSICA. Twelve pictures of your dreamy youth. At three, at six, at eight, at twelve, at sixteen. You took them when your father turned you out. They've followed you everywhere; how you must love yourself.

HUGO. Jessica, I'm not playing now.

JESSICA. When you were six you wore a stiff collar. It must have scratched your skinny little neck, and you had a velvet suit with a bow-tie!

HUGO [*who has been pretending to give up, suddenly springs at her*]. Give them to me, you little devil! Give them to me.

JESSICA. Let me go! [*They fall on to the bed.*] Look out—you'll kill us both.

HUGO. Give them to me!

JESSICA. I tell you it'll go off! [*HUGO gets up. She shows the revolver she has been holding behind her back.*] I found that too.

HUGO. Give it to me.

He takes it from her, goes to the pocket of his suit, takes the key, opens the suitcase, picks up the photographs and puts them with the revolver back in the suitcase. Pause.

JESSICA. What's that revolver for?

HUGO. I always carry one.

JESSICA. That's not true. You never had one before you came here. Why have you got a gun?

HUGO. Do you want to know?

JESSICA. Yes, but tell me seriously. You've no right to keep me out of your life.

HUGO. You won't tell a soul?

JESSICA. No one in the world.

HUGO. I'm going to kill Hoederer.

JESSICA. You're maddening, Hugo. I told you I wasn't playing any more.

HUGO. Ha! Ha! Am I playing? Am I serious? Mystery . . .

JESSICA. Why do you want to kill him? You don't even know him.

HUGO. So that my wife will take me seriously.

JESSICA. I'd adore you, I'd hide you, I'd feed you, I'd look after you in your hiding place. When we had been denounced by

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our neighbours, I should rush through the soldiers and take you in my arms, crying madly, 'I love you . . .'

HUGO. Tell me now.

JESSICA. What?

HUGO. That you love me.

JESSICA. I love you.

HUGO. Say it properly.

JESSICA. I love you.

HUGO. That's not properly.

JESSICA. What's the matter with you? Are you playing?

HUGO. No. I'm not playing.

JESSICA. Then why do you ask me like that? You don't usually.

HUGO. I don't know. I'd like to think you love me. It's my right, isn't it? Then say so. Say so really and truly.

JESSICA. I love you. I love you. No. I love you. Oh, go to hell. How would you say it?

HUGO. I love you.

JESSICA. You see. You can't do it any better than I can.

HUGO. Jessica, you don't believe what I just told you.

JESSICA. That you loved me?

HUGO. That I am going to kill Hoederer.

JESSICA. Of course I believe you.

HUGO. Jessica, try to understand. Be serious.

JESSICA. Why should I be serious?

HUGO. Because we can't play all the time.

JESSICA. I don't like being serious, but I'll try. I'll play at being serious.

HUGO. Look me in the eyes. No. Don't laugh. Listen. It's true about Hoederer. The Party has sent me.

JESSICA. I knew it. Why didn't you tell me before?

HUGO. You might have refused to come with me.

JESSICA. Why? It's your business. It doesn't concern me.

HUGO. It's a funny job, you know. . . . He looks a tough sort of egg.

JESSICA. We'll chloroform him and tie him to the mouth of a cannon.

HUGO. Jessica! I'm serious.

JESSICA. So am I.

HUGO. No, you're playing at being serious. You said so.

SCENE TWO

JESSICA. No, you said so.

HUGO. You must believe me—please, you must believe me.

JESSICA. I'll believe you if you'll believe I'm being serious.

HUGO. All right. I believe you.

JESSICA. No. You're playing at believing me.

HUGO. God give me patience! Jessica . . . [*Knock at the door.*]

Come in!

JESSICA *stands in front of the suitcase with her back to the audience, while HUGO opens the door. SLICK and GEORGES enter, smiling. Sub-machine guns and revolvers in their belts. Pause.*

GEORGES. Hullo.

HUGO. Yes?

GEORGES. We've come to give you a hand.

HUGO. What for?

SLICK. Unpacking.

JESSICA. It's very nice of you, but I can manage.

SLICK [*taking a petticoat from the back of a chair, and holding it at arm's length.*] Fold these things in the middle, don't you?

GEORGES. Hands off, Slick. Might give you ideas. You must excuse him, ma'am; we haven't seen a woman for six months.

SLICK. Couldn't even remember what they were like.

They look at her.

JESSICA. Is it coming back to you?

GEORGES. Yeh. Bit by bit.

JESSICA. Aren't there any girls in the village?

SLICK. Maybe. We don't get out.

GEORGES. The last secretary climbed the wall every night—so one morning we found him with his head in a pond. The old man decided the next one must bring his wife and get his relaxation at home.

JESSICA. Very thoughtful of him.

SLICK. Doesn't seem to think we need relaxation too.

JESSICA. Why not?

GEORGES. He says he wants to keep us wild.

HUGO. They are Hoederer's bodyguard.

JESSICA. D'you know I had guessed?

SLICK [*meaning his machine-gun*]. Because of this?

JESSICA. Because of that too.

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GEORGES. Don't think we're professionals, will you? I'm a plumber by trade. We're doing this as a special job, for the Party.

SLICK. Not afraid of us, are you?

JESSICA. Of course not. But I'd rather you put your decorations down. Put them in the corner.

GEORGES. Sorry.

SLICK. Can't be done.

JESSICA. Don't you even put them down to sleep!

GEORGES. No, ma'am.

HUGO. When I went in to see Hoederer, they pushed me along with the muzzles of their guns in my back.

GEORGES [*laughing*]. That's what we're like.

SLICK [*laughing*]. One little slip and you'd have been a widow.
[*Everyone laughs.*]

JESSICA. Your boss must be very frightened.

SLICK. He isn't frightened, but he doesn't want to be knocked off.

JESSICA. Why should he be killed?

SLICK. How should I know? All I know is someone wants to kill him. His pals came and warned him, nearly a fortnight ago.

JESSICA. How perfectly fascinating.

GEORGES. We're on guard, that's all. Oh! You'll get used to it. It's not much to look at. [*He is wandering round the room with an air of false negligence. When he gets to the cupboard, he opens it and brings out HUGO's suit.*] Gee, what an outfit! Watch for moths! [*Pretending to brush it, he feels the pockets of the suit, then puts it back in the cupboard.* JESSICA and HUGO look at each other.]

JESSICA. Why don't we all sit down?

SLICK. No. No, thanks.

JESSICA. Do you mind if I do? [*She and HUGO sit down.*]

SLICK [*going to the window*]. Nice view.

GEORGES. Comfortable place.

SLICK. Nice and quiet.

GEORGES. Seen the bed? Big enough for three.

SLICK. For four—newly weds don't take up much room.

GEORGES. All that waste space, when some people have to sleep on the floor.

SCENE TWO

SLICK. Shut up—you'll make me dream about it tonight.

JESSICA. Have you got beds?

GEORGES [*pointing to SLICK*]. He sleeps on the carpet in the office, I sleep in the corridor outside the old man's door.

JESSICA. Isn't it very uncomfortable?

GEORGES. It would be for your husband—he looks the delicate type. It's all right for us. Trouble is, we've got no place of our own. The garden isn't healthy, so we have to spend our time in the hall.

SLICK *bends down and looks under the bed.*

HUGO. What are you looking for?

SLICK. Rats. [*He gets up.*]

HUGO. Did you see any?

SLICK. No.

HUGO. I'm glad. [*Pause.*]

JESSICA. So you've left your boss all alone? Aren't you afraid something may happen to him if you stay away too long?

GEORGES. Leon has stopped with him. [*Pointing to the telephone.*]

If anything was up, he could always give us a ring.

Pause. HUGO *gets up, pale with nervousness.* JESSICA *gets up also.*

HUGO *goes to the door and opens it.*

HUGO. Well, come along any time. You'll always be welcome.

GEORGES [*goes to door calmly and closes it*]. We're going. In a minute. Just a formality.

HUGO. What formality?

SLICK. Got to search the room.

HUGO. No.

GEORGES. No?

HUGO. You'll do nothing of the sort.

GEORGES. Don't get excited. It's orders.

HUGO. Whose orders?

SLICK. Hoederer's.

HUGO. Hoederer ordered you to search my room?

GEORGES. Come on now, master-mind, don't play the fool.

We've been warned; someone's going to pull a gun one of these days. You don't think we're going to let anyone come here without going through his pockets? You might be toting a couple of grenades, or some other fireworks, though I must say, you don't look the type.

CRIME PASSIONNEL

HUGO. I asked if Hoederer had specifically ordered you to search my belongings.

SLICK [*to* GEORGES]. Specifically?

GEORGES. Specifically.

SLICK. No one comes in here without being frisked. It's orders.

HUGO. And I refuse to be searched. I'll be the exception that proves the rule. That's all.

GEORGES. Don't you belong to the Party?

HUGO. Of course.

GEORGES. Then what did they teach you back there? Don't you know what an order is?

HUGO. I know as well as you do.

GEORGES. And when you're given an order, don't you know you've got to carry it out?

HUGO. Of course I know.

GEORGES. Well, then?

HUGO. I obey orders, but I have my self-respect. I don't obey idiotic orders that are only given to make me look ridiculous.

GEORGES. D'you hear, Slick? Have you any self-respect?

SLICK. Don't think so. What about you, Georges?

GEORGES. You've got to have education before you can have self-respect.

HUGO. Don't you understand? If I joined the Party it was to ensure that one day all men should have the right to respect themselves.

GEORGES. Make him stop, Slick, or I'll burst into tears. We're different, master-mind. We joined the party because we were fed up with starving.

SLICK. And so that one day all the other bastards like us should get enough to eat.

GEORGES. Stop chewing the rag, Slick. Open that for a start.

HUGO. You shan't touch a thing.

GEORGES. Won't I, master-mind? How are you going to stop me?

HUGO. If you lay a finger on anything of mine, we leave the villa tonight, and Hoederer can look for a new secretary.

GEORGES. Gee, you're frightening me!

HUGO. All right, then, search, if you're not afraid.

SCENE TWO

GEORGES *scratches his head*. JESSICA, who has remained very calm during the whole scene, goes to them.

JESSICA. Why not telephone to Hoederer?

GEORGES. To Hoederer?

JESSICA. He'll tell you what to do.

GEORGES and SLICK consult each other with a look.

GEORGES. Could be. [*He goes to the telephone, rings and picks up the receiver.*] Hullo, Leon? Tell the old man this half-wit won't let us get on with the job. What? Oh, a lot of hot air. [*To SLICK.*] He's gone to ask.

SLICK. Okay. But I'll tell you one thing, Georges. I'm fond of the old man, but if he takes it into his head to make an exception for this bourgeois bastard, when you think we've frisked everyone who comes near the place, including the postman—I'm chucking in my hand.

GEORGES. I'm with you there. Either we search the place, or we're the ones who go.

SLICK. Maybe I have no self-respect, but I have my pride like anyone else.

HUGO. You may be right, Goliath; but if Hoederer himself gives the order to search, I shall still leave this house five minutes later.

HOEDERER *enters*.

HOEDERER. What's all this about?

SLICK *falls back a step*.

SLICK. He won't let us search him.

HOEDERER. No?

HUGO. If you allow them to search me, I go. That's all.

HOEDERER. I see.

GEORGES. If you don't let us search him, we're going.

HOEDERER. Sit down. [*They sit down, ill-humouredly.*] By the way, Hugo, no formality. We're all friends here. [*He picks up a slip and a pair of stockings from the back of a chair, and makes to carry them over to the bed.*]

JESSICA. Thank you. [*She takes them from him, rolls them up into a ball, and without moving, throws them on to the bed.*]

HOEDERER. What's your name?

JESSICA. Jessica.

HOEDERER [*looking at her*]. I thought you would be ugly.

CRIME PASSIONNEL

JESSICA. I'm sorry.

HOEDERER [*still looking at her*]. Yes. It's a pity. Were they quarrelling over you?

JESSICA. Not yet.

HOEDERER. Don't let that happen. [*He sits in an armchair.*] This question of the search, it doesn't matter.

SLICK. We . . .

HOEDERER. Doesn't matter at all. We'll talk about it later. [*To SLICK.*] What's he done? What do you accuse him of? Is he too well-dressed? He talks like a book?

SLICK. He's not our class.

HOEDERER. We leave all that outside. [*He looks at them.*] You've started out badly. [*To HUGO.*] You were insolent because you are weaker than they are. [*To SLICK and GEORGES.*] You were bad-tempered this morning, and you took it out on him. The next thing, you'll start playing tricks on him, and in a week, when I need him to take a letter, you'll tell me you've had to fish him out of the pond.

HUGO. Not if I can help it. . . .

HOEDERER. You can't help anything. Things mustn't get to that pitch, that's all. Four men who live together, either get along, or cut each other's throats. You'll be good enough to get along.

GEORGES [*with dignity*]. A man can't be responsible for his feelings.

HOEDERER [*with emphasis*]. Certainly he can. Particularly when he's on duty, with members of the same Party.

GEORGES. We don't belong to the same Party.

HOEDERER [*to HUGO*]. Aren't you one of us?

HUGO. Certainly.

HOEDERER. Well?

GEORGES. We may belong to the same Party, but we didn't join for the same reasons.

HOEDERER. Everyone joins for the same reasons.

GEORGES. Pardon me. He joined to teach poor people the respect they owe themselves.

HOEDERER. Nonsense.

SLICK. That's what he said.

HUGO. And you joined to get a square meal. That's what you said.

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HOEDERER. Well then? You're both agreed.

SLICK. What?

HOEDERER. Slick! Didn't you tell him that you were ashamed of being hungry? [*He bends towards SLICK and waits for an answer that does not come.*] That it made you mad because you couldn't think of anything else? That a lad of twenty can do better than spend all his time thinking about his belly?

SLICK. You didn't have to say that in front of him.

HOEDERER. Didn't you tell him all that?

SLICK. What does that prove?

HOEDERER. It proves that you wanted your grub and something else besides. He calls that self-respect. You mustn't mind the words he uses. Everyone has the right to use the words he likes.

SLICK. It wasn't respect. It made me feel sick when he called it self-respect. He uses the words that come into his head; he thinks of everything with his head.

HUGO. What else do you want me to think with?

SLICK. When it's been chopped off, master-mind, you won't be able to think with your head. It's true I wanted it to stop, good God, yes. Only for a moment, a single moment, to be able to think about something else. Anything but myself. But that wasn't self-respect. You've never been hungry and you come to us to preach, like the lady visitors who came to see my mother when she was drunk and told her she had no self-respect.

HUGO. That's a lie.

GEORGES. Have you ever been hungry? You're the kind that has to take a walk before meals to get up an appetite.

HUGO. Just this once you're right. I don't know what it is to have an appetite. If you'd seen the tonics I took as a kid! I always left half my food behind—what a waste! So they made me open my mouth: they said, one for daddy, one for mummy, one for Auntie Anna. And they pushed the spoon down my throat. Do you know what happened? I grew. But I never got any fatter. That's when they made me drink fresh blood from the slaughter-house, because I had no colour. I've never eaten meat from that day to this. Every night my father used to say: 'The boy isn't hungry. . . .' Every night,

can you imagine that? 'Eat, Hugo, eat: you'll make yourself ill.' They made me take cod-liver oil; that's the height of luxury; a drug to make you hungry, when there are people in the streets who would have sold themselves for a steak; I saw them from my windows, carrying banners: 'Give us bread.' Then I had to sit down at table. Eat, Hugo, eat. One for the night watchman, who is on strike, one for the old woman who picks scraps out of the dust-bin, one for the carpenter with the broken leg. I left my home. I joined the Party, and all I heard was the same thing over again: 'You've never been hungry, Hugo, why do you interfere? How can you understand? You've never been hungry.' No! I've never been hungry. Never! Never? Never! Maybe you can tell me what I must do to make you all stop reproaching me?

Pause.

HOEDERER. You heard him? All right. Tell him. Tell him what he must do, Slick! What do you suggest? Should he cut off a hand? Put out an eye? Give you his wife? What price must he pay for your forgiveness?

SLICK. I've nothing to forgive.

HOEDERER. Oh yes, you have: for joining the Party without being forced into it by poverty.

GEORGES. We don't reproach him. But there's a world between us: he's just an amateur. He joined because he thought it was a good idea, to make a gesture. We couldn't help ourselves.

HOEDERER. Do you think he could help himself? The hunger of others isn't easy to bear either.

GEORGES. Lots of people manage it quite well.

HOEDERER. That's because they have no imagination. The trouble with this boy is that he has too much.

SLICK. Okay. We don't want to hurt him. We don't like him, that's all. I suppose we have the right . . .

HOEDERER. *What* right? You have *no* right. None. 'We don't like him . . .' You bastards, go and look at yourselves in the glass, and then come and explain your delicate sentiments if you have the courage. A man is judged by his work. Take care I don't judge you by yours—you've been slacking rather a lot lately.

HUGO [*crying out*]. Don't try and defend me! Who asked you to

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make excuses for me? You can see it's no use; I'm used to it. When I saw them come in, just now, I recognized their expressions. They weren't very attractive. Believe me, they had come to make me pay for my father, and my grandfather, and my whole family who had always been able to eat their fill. I tell you I know them; they'll never be able to accept me. Thousands of them have looked at me with the same smile. I've fought. I've humiliated myself. I've done everything to make them forget. I've told them over and over again that I liked them, that I envied them, that I admired them. It was no use! No use! I'm the son of a rich father, an intellectual, a bastard who doesn't work with his hands. All right, let them think what they like. They are quite right. It's a question of class.

SLICK *and* GEORGES *look at each other in silence.*

HOEDERER [*to his bodyguard*]. Well? [SLICK *and* GEORGES *shrug their shoulders uncomfortably.*] I shan't be any more careful of him than I am of you; you know I don't spare anyone. He doesn't work with his hands, but he'll have a tough time with me. [*Annoyed.*] To hell with all this. I've had enough.

GEORGES [*making up his mind*]. Okay! [*To* HUGO.] It isn't that I like you. You can say what you like, there's something between us that'll never click. I don't say it's your fault, and it's true we didn't give you a break. I'll try not to make things tough for you. Okay?

HUGO [*limply*]. Okay.

Pause.

HOEDERER [*tranquilly*]. About this search . . .

SLICK. Yes. The search . . . well, er . . .

HOEDERER [*sharply*]. Who asked you? [*To* HUGO, *going back to his ordinary voice.*] I trust you, my boy, but you must be a realist. If I make an exception for you today, tomorrow they'll ask me to make another, and it'll end up with a bastard blowing us all to glory because we didn't turn out his pockets. Supposing they ask you politely, now that you're all friends, would you let them search?

HUGO. I'm . . . afraid not.

HOEDERER. Oh! [*He looks at him.*] And if I asked you? [*Pause.*]

I see. You've got your principles. I might make it a question

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of principle too. But principles and me. . . [Pause.] Look at me. Have you got a gun?

HUGO. No.

HOEDERER. Your wife?

HUGO. No.

HOEDERER. All right. I'll trust you. You two can go.

JESSICA. Wait. [*They turn round.*] Hugo, it would be wrong not to repay trust with trust.

HUGO. What?

JESSICA. You can search everything.

HUGO. But, Jessica . . .

JESSICA. Why not? You'll make them believe you're hiding a revolver.

HUGO. Idiot!

JESSICA. Then why not let them? Your honour is satisfied. We're asking them.

GEORGES and SLICK *are still hesitating in the doorway.*

HOEDERER. Well? What are you waiting for? You heard her?

SLICK. We thought . . .

HOEDERER. Don't think. Do as you're told.

SLICK. Okay, okay.

GEORGES. No point in wasting all that time . . .

While they start to search, half-heartedly, HUGO stares at JESSICA in stupefaction.

HOEDERER [*to SLICK and GEORGES*]. And let that teach you to trust other people. I always trust people. I trust everyone. [*They search.*] What are you doing? You must make a proper search, because they asked us to do it properly. Slick, look under the cupboard. That's right. Take out that suit. Feel it.

SLICK. I have.

HOEDERER. Then do it again. Look under the mattress. That's right. Slick, carry on. Georges, you come here. Frisk him. You only need feel his pockets. There. And his trousers pockets. That's right. And the revolver-pocket. Fine.

JESSICA. What about me?

HOEDERER. If you like. Georges. [*GEORGES doesn't move.*] What's the matter? Afraid of her?

GEORGES. It's all right!

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He goes to JESSICA, very red in the face, and touches her with the tips of his fingers. JESSICA laughs.

JESSICA. He's like a lady's maid.

SLICK *has reached the suitcase which held the revolver.*

SLICK. Are the cases empty?

HUGO [*strained*]. Yes.

HOEDERER [*looks at him carefully*]. That one too?

SLICK [*picks it up*]. No.

HUGO. Oh . . . no, not that one. I was just going to unpack it when you came in.

HOEDERER. Open it.

SLICK *opens it and hunts through it.*

SLICK. Nothing here.

HOEDERER. Good. That's over. You may go.

SLICK [*to HUGO*]. No hard feelings.

HUGO. No hard feelings.

JESSICA [*as they go out*]. I'll come and see you in your hall. *They have gone.*

HOEDERER. If I were you, I wouldn't go too often.

JESSICA. Why not? I think they're sweet—especially Georges; he's such a baby.

HOEDERER. Hm! [*He goes to her.*] You're pretty, and that's a fact. You don't have to apologize. But, things being what they are, I can only see two alternatives. First, you'll be good to us all, if your heart is big enough.

JESSICA. It's very small.

HOEDERER. That's what I thought. Besides, they'd still manage to fight. There's only one solution: when your husband is out, lock the door and don't open to anyone, not even to me.

JESSICA. I see. Still, if you don't mind, I'll choose the third way.

HOEDERER. Just as you like. [*He bends towards her and breathes deeply.*] That's a wonderful scent. Don't use perfume when you visit the boys.

JESSICA. I never use scent.

HOEDERER. Pity. [*He turns and walks slowly to the middle of the room, then stops. During the scene his eyes dart everywhere. He is looking for something. From time to time, his gaze rests on HUGO, examining him.*] Well. There it is. [*Pause.*]

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There it is! [*Pause.*] Hugo, you report for duty tomorrow morning at ten o'clock.

HUGO. Yes, I know.

HOEDERER [*distract, his eyes are ferreting everywhere*]. Good. Good. Good. That's right. Everything's fine. All's well that ends well. You look very odd, standing there. Everything's all right; we're all friends again. Everyone's happy . . . [*Abruptly.*] You're tired, my boy.

HUGO. It's nothing. [*HOEDERER looks at him carefully. HUGO embarrassed, speaks with an effort.*] About that . . . that incident just now, I . . . I apologize.

HOEDERER [*without taking his eyes off HUGO*]. I've forgotten it already.

HUGO. In future I won't give you any reason to complain. I will obey everything to the letter.

HOEDERER. You've already said that. Sure you aren't feeling ill? [*HUGO does not reply.*] If you were ill, there'd still be time to say so, and then I could ask the Committee to send someone else to take over from you.

HUGO. I'm not ill.

HOEDERER. Good. Well, I must leave you. You probably want to be alone, anyway. [*He goes to the table and looks at the books.*] Hegel, Marx, very good. Lorca, Thomas, Eliot: never heard of them. [*He flips through the books.*]

HUGO. They are poets.

HOEDERER [*picking up another book*]. Poetry . . . poetry . . . more poetry. Do you write poems?

HUGO. N-no.

HOEDERER. Meaning, you used to. [*He goes away from the table, stops in front of the bed.*] A dressing-gown! You do yourself well. [*He offers him a cigarette.*]

HUGO [*refusing*]. Thank you.

HOEDERER. Don't you smoke? [*HUGO shakes his head.*] Good. The Committee tells me you've never taken part in any direct action. Is that so?

HUGO. I was in charge of the newspaper.

HOEDERER. So I'm told. I haven't had a copy for two months. Before then you were editing it?

HUGO. Yes.

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HOEDERER. You were doing a good job. So they gave up the services of such a good editor to send you to me?

HUGO. They thought I would suit you.

HOEDERER. Very kind of them. What about you? Are you glad you've left your old job?

HUGO. I . . .

HOEDERER. That paper—it belonged to you. There were risks involved, responsibilities: in a sense, you might even call it direct action. [*He looks at HUGO.*] And now you're my secretary. [*Pause.*] Why did you give it all up? Why?

HUGO. I obey my orders.

HOEDERER. Don't talk about orders all the time. I'm very wary of people who talk about nothing else.

HUGO. I need discipline.

HOEDERER. I see. We'll probably get along. [*He puts his hand on HUGO's shoulder.*] Listen . . .

HUGO *frees himself and jumps back.* HOEDERER *looks at him with renewed interest. His voice becomes hard and cutting.*

Ah? [*Pause.*] Ha! Ha!

HUGO. I . . . I don't like being touched.

HOEDERER [*in a hard quick voice*]. When they searched that suitcase you were afraid: why?

HUGO. I wasn't afraid.

HOEDERER. I say you were afraid. What is in that case?

HUGO. Your men searched and found nothing.

HOEDERER. Nothing? We'll see. [*He goes to the case and opens it.*] They were looking for a gun. A gun can be hidden in a suitcase, but so can papers.

HUGO. Or strictly personal possessions.

HOEDERER. From the moment you come under my orders, get this into your head: you have no personal possessions. [*He rummages.*] Shirts, pants, everything new. Are you in the money?

HUGO. My wife has some.

HOEDERER. What on earth are these photos? [*He picks them up and looks at them. Pause.*] That's it. So that's it. [*He looks at another photo.*] A velvet suit . . . [*He looks at a third.*] A sailor collar and a beret. What a fine little gentleman!

HUGO. Give me those photos!

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HOEDERER. Sh! [*He pushes him off.*] So that's what they were—your strictly personal possessions. You were afraid my boys would find them.

HUGO. If they had laid their filthy paws on them, if they had laughed when they looked at them . . . I . . .

HOEDERER. Well then, the mystery is solved! You see what it is to have a crime marked on your face; I would have sworn you were hiding at least a hand-grenade. [*He looks at the photos.*] You haven't changed. The skinny little legs . . . I can see you never had an appetite. You were so small they made you stand on a chair, you folded your arms and surveyed the world like a Napoleon. You didn't look very happy. No . . . it can't always be funny to be the son of rich people. It's a bad start in life. Why do you cart your past around if you want to bury it? [*Vague gesture from HUGO.*] You spend a great deal of time on yourself.

HUGO. I joined the Party to forget myself.

HOEDERER. And remind yourself every minute that you must forget. Well! We all have our own methods. [*He gives the photos back to HUGO.*] Hide them well. [*HUGO takes them and puts them in his inside pocket.*] See you in the morning, Hugo.

HUGO. Yes. Good night.

HOEDERER. Good night, Jessica.

JESSICA. Good night.

In the doorway, HOEDERER turns.

HOEDERER. Close the shutters and lock the door. You never know who may be in the garden. That's an order.

He goes out. HUGO goes to the door and double-locks it.

JESSICA. You were right. He is common. But he wasn't wearing a spotted tie.

HUGO. Where is the revolver?

JESSICA. I did enjoy that, honey-bee. It's the first time I've seen you up against real men.

HUGO. Jessica, where is the revolver?

JESSICA. My soul's delight, you don't know the rules of this game; what about the window? We can be seen from outside.

HUGO [*closes the shutters and comes back to her.*] Now?

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JESSICA [*taking the revolver from her corsage*]. When it comes to searching, Hoederer ought to have a woman too. I'm going to volunteer.

HUGO. When did you take it?

JESSICA. When you let in the watch-dogs.

HUGO. I thought they'd caught you in your own trap.

JESSICA. I nearly laughed in his face: 'I trust you! I trust everybody. Let that teach you to trust people. . . .' What's he thinking of? This confidence trick only works with men.

HUGO. Really?

JESSICA. You can hold your tongue, honey-bee. You were in a fine state.

HUGO. Me? When?

JESSICA. When he told you he trusted you.

HUGO. I wasn't in a state.

JESSICA. Yes, you were.

HUGO. I wasn't.

JESSICA. If you ever leave me alone with a handsome man, don't tell me you trust me, because I'm warning you: that won't stop me deceiving you, if I want to. Just the opposite.

HUGO. I'm quite happy. I'd go off with my eyes shut.

JESSICA. Do you think you'd catch me with sentiments?

HUGO. No, my little statue of ice. I believe in the coldness of the snow. The most burning seducer would freeze his fingers. He'd caress you to warm you a little, and you would melt between his hands.

JESSICA. Idiot; I'm not playing any more. [*A very short silence.*] Were you very afraid?

HUGO. Just now? No. I don't think so. I watched them search, and I thought: 'This is a game.' Nothing ever seems very real to me.

JESSICA. Not even me?

HUGO. You. [*Looks at her for a moment, then turns his head away.*] Tell me. Were you afraid too?

JESSICA. When I realized they were going to search me. I was sure Georges would hardly touch me, but Slick would have stripped me. I wasn't afraid he'd find the revolver; I was afraid of his hands.

HUGO. I shouldn't have dragged you into this affair.

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JESSICA. Don't you believe it. I've always wanted to have adventures.

HUGO. Jessica, this isn't a game. He's a dangerous man.

JESSICA. Dangerous? To whom?

HUGO. To the Party.

JESSICA. The Party? I thought he was the leader.

HUGO. He is *one* of the leaders. That's why . . .

JESSICA. Don't try to explain. I'll take your word.

HUGO. What do you believe?

JESSICA [*reciting*]. I believe this man is dangerous, that he must be got rid of, and you have come to kill him. . . .

HUGO. Sh! [*Pause.*] Look at me. Sometimes I tell myself you are pretending to believe me, and you don't really believe me. Sometimes I think you really do believe. But you pretend not to believe. Which is true?

JESSICA [*laughing*]. Nothing is true.

HUGO [*looking at her*]. If I could read your mind . . .

JESSICA. Try.

HUGO [*shrugging his shoulders*]. Bah! [*Pause.*] Dear God, I'm going to kill a man. I should feel the weight of that thought like a stone. There should be a great silence in my head. [*Crying out.*] Silence! [*Pause.*] Did you see how *solid* he was? How full of life? [*Pause.*] It's true! It's true! It's *true*! I'm really going to kill him; in a week's time he'll be lying on the ground with five bullets in his hide. [*Pause.*] What a game!

JESSICA [*beginning to laugh*]. Poor little honey-bee, if you want to convince me you're an assassin, you must begin by convincing yourself.

HUGO. You don't think I look convinced?

JESSICA. Not in the least; you're playing your part very badly.

HUGO. But I'm not playing, Jessica.

JESSICA. Yes, you are. Besides, how could you kill him? I've got the revolver.

HUGO. Give it back to me.

JESSICA. Never, never, never! I won it. If it wasn't for me, you'd have lost it!

HUGO. Give me that gun.

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JESSICA. No, I shan't. I'll go to Hoederer, and I'll say: I've come to make you happy, and while he is kissing me . . .

HUGO, *who has pretended to give up, throws himself on her, in the same way as at the beginning of the scene. They fall on the bed, struggling, shouting and laughing. HUGO finally snatches the revolver, as the curtain falls, and she cries out:*

Look out! Look out! It'll go off!

CURTAIN

SCENE THREE

Hoederer's office. Afternoon. Ten days later.

An austere, but comfortable room. On the right, a desk. In the middle, a table loaded with books and pamphlets, covered by a carpet which reaches to the ground. At the side, on the left, a window is set on an angle, from which you can see the trees of the garden. Back right, a door. On the left of the door, a kitchen table with a gas-ring on it. Standing on this is a coffee-pot.

HUGO *is alone. He goes to the desk, picks up Hoederer's pen and looks at it. Then goes back to the gas-ring, picks up the coffee-pot and looks at it, whistling. JESSICA enters quietly.*

JESSICA. What are you doing?

HUGO [*puts the coffee-pot down quickly*]. Jessica, you've been told not to come into the office.

JESSICA. What were you doing with that coffee-pot?

HUGO. What are you doing here?

JESSICA. I've come to see you, my soul.

HUGO. All right. You've seen me. Now run away! Hoederer is coming.

JESSICA. I was so bored without you, honey-bee.

HUGO. I've no time to play now, Jessica.

JESSICA [*looking round her*]. Naturally, you didn't know how to

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describe anything. It smells of stale tobacco smoke, like my father's study, when I was little. It ought to be easy to describe the way a room smells.

HUGO. Listen to me . . .

JESSICA. Wait! [*She hunts for something in the pocket of her jacket.*] I came to bring you this.

HUGO. What?

JESSICA. This! You'd forgotten it.

HUGO. I hadn't forgotten it; I never carry it.

JESSICA. Exactly; you should never be without it.

HUGO. Jessica, you don't seem to understand. I've told you over and over again you're not to come here. If you want to play, there's the studio and the garden.

JESSICA. Hugo, you're talking to me as if I were six.

HUGO. Whose fault is that? It's quite unbearable; you can't look at me without laughing. It will be charming when we're both fifty. We must stop it; it's only a habit, a bad habit we've both got to get out of. D'you see?

JESSICA. Yes, I see.

HUGO. Then you might try.

JESSICA. Yes.

HUGO. Good. You can begin by taking that revolver back.

JESSICA. I can't.

HUGO. Jessica!

JESSICA. It's yours. You've got to take it.

HUGO. I told you I've no use for it.

JESSICA. What do you want me to do with it?

HUGO. I don't care. Do as you please.

JESSICA. You aren't going to make your wife spend the rest of the day walking about with a gun in her pocket?

HUGO. Go home and put it back in my suitcase.

JESSICA. I don't want to go home; you're being beastly.

HUGO. All you had to do was not bring it here.

JESSICA. All you had to do was not forget to bring it.

HUGO. I tell you I didn't forget it.

JESSICA. No? Then you must have changed your plans.

HUGO. No, I haven't.

JESSICA. Yes, or no, do you mean to . . .

HUGO. Sh! Yes, yes, yes! But not today.

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JESSICA. Oh, Hugo, my darling Hugo, why not today? I'm so bored. I've read all the books you gave me, and I don't want to spend the whole day lying in bed, like an odalisque. I'll get too fat. What are you waiting for?

HUGO. It's impossible to talk to you. You want to play all the time.

JESSICA. You're the one who's playing. For ten days you've been putting on airs to impress me, and the man is still alive. If it's a game, it's going on too long; we only talk in whispers, for fear someone will hear, and I have to put up with all your whims, just as if you were pregnant!

HUGO. You know very well it's not a game.

JESSICA [*drily*]. Then it's worse; I hate people who don't do what they've decided to do. If you want me to believe you, you must get it over today.

HUGO. It's not convenient today.

JESSICA [*resuming her ordinary voice*]. You see!

HUGO. Oh! You're maddening. Some people are coming to see him. There!

JESSICA. How many?

HUGO. Two.

JESSICA. Kill them as well.

HUGO. There's nothing more out of place than someone who insists on playing when other people don't want to. I don't ask you to help me, oh, no! All I ask is that you don't hinder me.

JESSICA. All right! All right! Do as you please, since you insist on keeping me out of your life. But take this gun. If I keep it, it'll stretch my pockets out of shape.

HUGO. If I take it, you promise you'll go away?

JESSICA. Take it first.

HUGO *takes the gun and puts it in his pocket.*

HUGO. Now go.

JESSICA. In a minute. I suppose I can take a look at the room where my husband works. [*She goes behind HOEDERER's desk. Pointing.*] Who sits there? You or him?

HUGO [*unwillingly*]. He does. [*Pointing to the table.*] I work over there.

JESSICA [*without listening*]. Is this his writing? [*She picks up a paper from the desk.*]

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HUGO. Yes.

JESSICA [*keenly interested*]. Ha! Ha! Ha!

HUGO. Put that down.

JESSICA. D'you see how his writing slopes upwards? and that he doesn't join his letters?

HUGO. So what?

JESSICA. So what? It's very important.

HUGO. To whom?

JESSICA. For reading his character. Might as well know the man you're going to kill. Look at the space he leaves between the words! You'd say each letter is a tiny island—the words an archipelago. That must mean something.

HUGO. What?

JESSICA. I don't know. It's maddening: his memories, the women he has known, his way of making love, all that is here and I don't know how to read it. . . . Hugo, you ought to buy a book on graphology, I feel I'm gifted that way.

HUGO. I'll buy you one if you'll go away at once.

JESSICA. That looks like a piano-stool.

HUGO. It is a piano-stool.

JESSICA [*sitting on the stool and making it whirl round*]. So here he sits. He sits, smokes, talks, spins round on his little stool . . .

HUGO. Yes.

JESSICA [*taking the cork out of a decanter on the desk and sniffing*]. Does he drink?

HUGO. Like a fish.

JESSICA. While he's working?

HUGO. Yes.

JESSICA. Isn't he ever drunk?

HUGO. Never.

JESSICA. I hope you don't drink, even if he offers it to you. You can't carry it.

HUGO. Don't act like a sister; I know quite well I can't drink spirits, nor can I smoke. I can't stand heat either, nor damp, nor the smell of hay, nor anything.

JESSICA [*slowly*]. He sits there, he talks, smokes, drinks, swings round . . .

HUGO. Yes, and I . . .

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JESSICA [*pointing to the gas-ring*]. What's that? Does he do his own cooking?

HUGO. Yes.

JESSICA [*bursting out laughing*]. But why? I could cook for him, since I get your meals; he could come and eat with us.

HUGO. You don't cook as well as he does; besides, I think he likes it. In the morning he makes us coffee. Very good black-market coffee. . . .

JESSICA [*pointing to the coffee-pot*]. In that?

HUGO. Yes.

JESSICA. Was that what you were holding when I came in?

HUGO. Yes.

JESSICA. Why did you pick it up? What were you trying to find out?

HUGO. I don't know. [*Pause.*] It looks real enough when he touches it. [*He picks it up.*] Everything he touches looks real. He pours out the coffee, I drink it, I watch him drinking, and I know that the real taste of coffee is in his mouth. [*Pause.*] It's that real taste that will disappear; real heat, real light. Nothing will be left but this. [*He stares at the coffee-pot.*]

JESSICA. How do you mean?

HUGO [*with a sweeping gesture, taking in the whole room.*] All this; my lies. [*He puts the coffee-pot down.*] I am living in an artificial world. [*He becomes absorbed in his own thoughts.*]

JESSICA. Hugo!

HUGO [*starting*]. Eh?

JESSICA. The smell of tobacco will fade when he is dead. [HUGO *shrugs his shoulders.*] It will disappear through the cracks in the door, and the room won't smell any more. [*Abruptly.*] Don't kill him.

HUGO. So you believe I'm going to kill him? Answer me. You do believe?

JESSICA. I don't know. Everything looks so peaceful. And besides, it smells like my home. . . . Nothing will happen! Nothing can happen; you're teasing me.

HUGO. Here he is. Get out through the window. [*He tries to drag her away.*]

JESSICA [*resisting*]. I want to see what you're like when you're alone together.

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HUGO [*dragging her*]. Be quick.

JESSICA [*very quickly*]. At home, I used to get under the table and watch my father working for hours.

HUGO *opens the window with his left hand*. JESSICA *breaks away from him and slips under the table*. HOEDERER *enters*.

HOEDERER. What are you doing there?

JESSICA. Hiding.

HOEDERER. What for ?

JESSICA. To see what you're like when I'm not here.

HOEDERER. Well, now you know. [*To HUGO.*] Who let her in?

HUGO. I don't know.

HOEDERER. She's your wife; keep her in better control.

JESSICA. Poor little honey-bee, he thinks you're my husband.

HOEDERER. Isn't he?

JESSICA. He's my baby brother.

HOEDERER [*to HUGO*]. She doesn't respect you much.

HUGO. No.

HOEDERER. When you belong to the Party, you should marry inside the Party.

JESSICA. Why?

HOEDERER. It's easier.

JESSICA. How do you know I don't belong to the Party?

HOEDERER. It's obvious. [*He looks at her.*] You don't know how to do anything, except make love. . . .

JESSICA. Not even that. [*Pointing to HUGO.*] Do you think I'm bad for him?

HOEDERER. Did you come here to ask me that?

JESSICA. Why not?

HOEDERER. I suppose you're his extravagance. Sons of bourgeois families always bring some part of their lost riches with them, as a keepsake. Some bring their freedom of thought, others a tie-pin. He brought his wife.

JESSICA. Yes. You don't need such luxuries.

HOEDERER. Of course not. [*They look at each other.*] Come on now, get the hell out of here. And don't stick your nose inside this room again.

JESSICA. Just as you like. I leave you to your masculine friends.
She goes out with dignity.

HOEDERER. Do you want to keep her with you?

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HUGO. Of course.

HOEDERER. Then see she never comes in here again. If I have to choose between a man and a skirt, I'd choose the man; but don't make things too difficult for me.

HUGO. You don't know Jessica. [*Laughing.*]

HOEDERER. Maybe not. Just as well, perhaps. [*Pause.*] Tell her not to come here again. [*Abruptly.*] What time is it?

HUGO. Ten past four.

HOEDERER. They're late. [*He goes to the window, glances out, then turns back.*]

HUGO. Have you any letters to dictate?

HOEDERER. Not today. [*On a movement from HUGO.*] No. Stay here. Ten past four?

HUGO. Yes.

HOEDERER. If they don't come, they'll be sorry.

HUGO. Who's coming?

HOEDERER. You'll see. People from your world. [*He paces up and down.*] I don't like waiting. [*Returning to HUGO.*] If they come, the job's in the bag; but if they get cold feet at the last minute, it'll all have to be done again. And I don't believe I should have the time. How old are you?

HUGO. Twenty-one.

HOEDERER. You've got plenty of time.

HUGO. You're not so old.

HOEDERER. I'm not old, but my time's up. [*He points to the garden.*] On the other side of those walls there are people who think of nothing, night and day, but how to get rid of me. And because I can't be on my guard all the time, sooner or later they'll get me.

HUGO. How do you know they think about it night and day?

HOEDERER. They've got one-track minds.

HUGO. Do you know them?

HOEDERER. No. Did you hear a car then?

HUGO. No. [*They listen.*] No.

HOEDERER. It'd be just the moment for one of them to jump over the wall. It'd be an opportunity for him to do some good work.

HUGO [*slowly*]. Good work . . .

HOEDERER [*watching him*]. You see, it'd be better for them if I

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couldn't receive my guests. [*He goes to the desk and pours out a drink.*] Want a drink?

HUGO. No. [*Pause.*] Are you afraid?

HOEDERER. Of what?

HUGO. Of dying.

HOEDERER. No, but I'm in a hurry. I'm always in a hurry. In the old days, I didn't mind waiting. Now I can't wait any more.

HUGO. How you must hate them.

HOEDERER. Why? In principle I don't object to political assassinations.

HUGO. Give me a drink.

HOEDERER. Really? [*He takes the decanter and pours out a drink.*

HUGO *drinks without taking his eyes off* HOEDERER.] Well, what's the matter? Haven't you seen me before?

HUGO. No, I've never seen you before.

HOEDERER. As far as you're concerned, I'm only a milestone, eh? That's quite natural. You're looking down on me from -your future. You're saying to yourself: 'I'll spend two or three years with this old boy and when he's been knocked off, I'll go elsewhere and do something else. . . .'

HUGO. I don't know if I'll ever do anything else.

HOEDERER. In twenty years' time you'll say to your pals: 'In the old days, when I was Hoederer's secretary . . .' In twenty years' time. That's funny!

HUGO. Twenty years . . .

HOEDERER. Well?

HUGO. It's a long time.

HOEDERER. Why? Are you T.B.?

HUGO. No. Give me another drink. [*HOEDERER pours it out.*]

I've always been sure I shouldn't make old bones. I'm in a hurry too.

HOEDERER. It's not the same thing.

HUGO. No. [*Pause.*] Sometimes, I'd cut off my right hand if I could be a man straight away and sometimes I feel I don't want to outgrow my youth.

HOEDERER. I don't know what that is.

HUGO. What?

HOEDERER. I never knew what it was to be young. I was a child and then I was a man.

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HUGO. Yes. Mine's a bourgeois affliction. [*He laughs.*] It's quite often fatal.

HOEDERER. Do you want me to help you?

HUGO. What?

HOEDERER. You look as though you've started badly. Would you like me to help you?

HUGO [*with a start*]. Not you! [*He catches himself up quickly.*] No one can help me.

HOEDERER [*going to him*]. Listen to me. [*He stops short and listens.*] Here they are. [*He goes to the window. HUGO follows him.*] The tall one is Karsky, secretary of the Pentagon. The fat one is Prince Paul.

HUGO. The son of the Regent?

HOEDERER. Yes. [*His expression has changed, he looks indifferent, hard and sure of himself.*] You've had enough to drink. Give me your glass. [*He empties it into the garden.*] Go and sit down; listen to everything and if I nod, take notes.

HOEDERER *closes the window and sits down at his desk. The two visitors enter, followed by SLICK and GEORGES who push them along with their machine-guns in their backs.*

KARSKY. I am Karsky.

HOEDERER [*without rising*]. I know.

KARSKY. And you know who is with me?

HOEDERER. Yes.

KARSKY. Send your guards away.

HOEDERER. That's all right, boys. You can go.

SLICK and GEORGES *go out.*

KARSKY [*ironically*]. You're well looked after.

HOEDERER. If I hadn't taken a few precautions lately, I shouldn't have had the pleasure of seeing you.

KARSKY [*turning towards HUGO*]. Who's that?

HOEDERER. My secretary. He can stay with us.

KARSKY [*going to him*]. Why its Hugo Barine. [*HUGO does not reply.*] You're working with these people.

HUGO. Yes.

KARSKY. I met your father last week. Are you still interested in hearing how he is?

HUGO. No.

KARSKY. It's very likely you will be responsible for his death.

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HUGO. It's pretty certain he's responsible for my life. We're quits.

KARSKY [*without raising his voice*]. You're a little blackguard.

HUGO. Tell me . . .

HOEDERER. Shut up. [*To KARSKY.*] I don't suppose you came here to insult my secretary? Won't you sit down? [*They sit down.*] Brandy?

KARSKY. No, thank you.

PRINCE. I'll join you with pleasure.

HOEDERER *pours out the drinks*. HUGO *takes his glass to the* PRINCE.

KARSKY. So this is the famous Hoederer. [*He looks at him.*] Yesterday your men fired on ours again.

HOEDERER. Why?

KARSKY. We had an arms dump in a garage and your chaps wanted to take it; as simple as that.

HOEDERER. Did they get the stuff?

KARSKY. Yes.

HOEDERER. Well played.

KARSKY. Nothing to be proud of; they were ten to one.

HOEDERER. When you want to win, you should always be ten to one.

KARSKY. Don't let's continue this discussion, I feel we shall never understand each other. We don't belong to the same race.

HOEDERER. We belong to the same race, but not the same class.

PRINCE. Gentlemen, supposing we come to business.

HOEDERER. Certainly. Go ahead.

KARSKY. We've come to hear your proposals.

HOEDERER. There must be some mistake.

KARSKY. Very likely. If I hadn't thought you had a proposition to make, I certainly shouldn't have taken the trouble to come here.

HOEDERER. I've no proposition to make.

KARSKY. Very well. [*He rises.*]

PRINCE. Gentlemen, please. Sit down again, Karsky. This is a bad beginning. Can we not put a little frankness into this discussion?

KARSKY [*to the PRINCE*]. Frankness? Did you see his eyes when

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his watch-dogs pushed us in here with their tommy-guns? These people hate us. I agreed to this interview at your insistence, but I'm convinced no good will come of it.

PRINCE. Karsky, last year you organized two attempts on my father's life and yet I agreed to meet you. We may not have much cause to love each other, but our personal feelings have no importance when it is a question of the national interest. [*Pause.*] Naturally, we don't always quite agree as to what that interest is. You, Hoederer, have made yourself the interpreter, perhaps somewhat too exclusively, of the legitimate claims of the working classes. My father and I have always been sympathetic towards those claims, but we have been forced, through the threatening attitude of Germany, to make them take a second place, because we felt our primary duty was to safeguard the independence of our country, even at the cost of unpopular measures.

HOEDERER. Meaning the declaration of war against the U.S.S.R.

PRINCE. On the other hand, Karsky and his friends, who didn't share our point of view on foreign affairs, have perhaps underestimated how necessary it was for Illythia to show herself united and strong in foreign eyes, a single people behind a single leader, and they formed an underground resistance party. That is why two such men, equally honest, equally devoted to their country, have momentarily found themselves separated by the different conceptions they have of their duty. [*HOEDERER laughs vulgarly.*] I beg your pardon?

HOEDERER. Nothing. Go on.

PRINCE. Today, these positions have happily drawn together and it seems that each of us has a wider understanding of each other's point of view. My father does not wish to continue this useless and costly war. Naturally, we are in no position to conclude a separate peace, but I can guarantee that the military operations will be carried out without an excess of zeal. For his part, Karsky feels that internal dissensions can only militate against our country and we both wish to prepare for future peace by creating national unity cannot be acknowledged open suspicions in Germany but it can find its clandestine organizations.

Dr. TPM.Lib.MKU

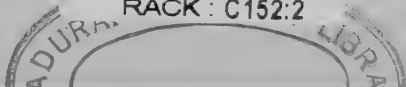


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HOEDERER. And so?

PRINCE. That's all. Karsky and I wished to bring you the good news of our agreement in principle.

HOEDERER. How does that concern me?

KARSKY. That's enough; we're wasting our time.

PRINCE [*continuing*]. It goes without saying that this unity must be as wide as possible. If the Proletarian Party wishes to join us.

HOEDERER. What are you offering?

KARSKY. Two seats for your Party on the Clandestine National Committee we are about to form.

HOEDERER. Two out of how many?

KARSKY. Twelve.

HOEDERER [*pretending a polite interest*]. Two out of twelve?

KARSKY. The Regent will nominate four of his counsellors. Six others will be from the Pentagon. The president will be elected.

HOEDERER. Two out of twelve. [*Sneering.*]

KARSKY. The majority of the Peasant electorate belong to the Pentagon, say fifty-seven per cent of the population, plus nearly the whole of the bourgeois class. The working class represents scarcely twenty per cent of the country and you haven't got them all behind you.

HOEDERER. No. Go on?

KARSKY. We'll arrange a remodelling and a fusion of our two clandestine organizations. Your men will co-operate with the arrangements of the Pentagon Party.

HOEDERER. You mean my troops will be absorbed by the Pentagon.

KARSKY. It is the best formula for reconciliation.

HOEDERER. In other words, reconciliation by annihilating one of the adversaries. After that, it's quite logical to give us merely two seats on the Central Committee. It's really two too many; those seats will be representing precisely nothing.

KARSKY. You're not obliged to accept.

PRINCE [*swiftly*]. But if you accept, naturally, the government might be inclined to revoke the laws of '39 against the Press, trade unions and the workmen's card.

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HOEDERER. What a temptation! [*He strikes the table.*] Good. Well, now we know each other; let's get to work. Here are my conditions. A ruling committee reduced to six members. The Proletarian Party will hold three seats. You can dispose of the other three as you please. The clandestine organizations will remain strictly separate and will undertake no joint action except on a vote of the Central Committee. Take it or leave it.

KARSKY. Are you joking?

HOEDERER. You're not obliged to accept.

KARSKY [*to the PRINCE*]. I told you, you could never deal with these people. We have two-thirds of the country, money, weapons, trained para-military formations, without counting the moral priority given us by our martyrs. And a handful of men without a farthing calmly demand the majority of seats on the Central Committee!

HOEDERER. Well? You refuse?

KARSKY. We refuse. We can do without you.

HOEDERER. All right, then get out. [*KARSKY hesitates for a moment, then goes to the door. The PRINCE has not moved.*]

Look at the prince, Karsky; he's cleverer than you. He's understood already.

PRINCE [*to KARSKY, gently*]. We cannot reject these proposals without examining them.

KARSKY [*violently*]. They're not proposals; they are ridiculous demands, and I refuse to discuss them. [*But he doesn't move.*]

HOEDERER. In '42 the police were hunting your men and ours. You organized attacks on the Regent and we sabotaged war production. When a Pentagon member met one of our boys, one of them was always left in the gutter. Suddenly, today you want everyone to kiss and be friends. Why?

PRINCE. For the good of the country.

HOEDERER. Why isn't it the same good as it was in '42? [*Pause.*]

Could it be because the Russians beat Paulus at Stalingrad and German troops are busy losing the war?

PRINCE. It is evident that the evolution of the war has created a new situation. But I do not see . . .

HOEDERER. On the contrary, I'm sure you see quite well. You want to save Illythia, I'm certain. But you want to save her

as she is with her régime of social inequality and her class privileges. When it looked as though the Germans would win, your father ranged himself on their side. Today the luck has changed and he is trying to pacify the Russians. It's more difficult.

KARSKY. Hoederer, it was in fighting against Germany that so many of our people fell and I won't let you say that we have made peace with our enemies to preserve our privileges.

HOEDERER. I know, Karsky; the Pentagon is anti-German. You're on a safe wicket; the Regent gave guarantees to Hitler to prevent him invading Illythia. You were anti-Russian too, because the Russians were a long way away. 'Illythia, Illythia alone . . .' I know the song. You sang it to the nationalist bourgeoisie for two years. But the Russians are drawing nearer, in a year they will be among us, Illythia won't be so much alone. So? You must find fresh guarantees. How lucky it would be if you could say to them: the Pentagon worked for you and the Regent was playing a double game. Only, you see, they don't have to believe you. What will they do? Eh? What will they do? After all, we did declare war on them.

PRINCE. My dear Hoederer, when the U.S.S.R. understands that we sincerely . . .

HOEDERER. When they understand that a fascist dictator and a Conservative party have rushed to help them in their victory 'sincerely,' I don't think they'll be very grateful. [*Pause.*] Only one party has kept the confidence of the U.S.S.R., only one party has remained in contact with her throughout the war, only one party can send envoys through the lines, only one party can guarantee your little combine; ours. When the Russians get here, they'll see through our eyes. [*Pause.*] You see; you'll have to do as we say.

KARSKY. I should have refused to come.

PRINCE. Karsky!

KARSKY. I should have known you would reply to our honest proposals with threats of blackmail.

HOEDERER. Go ahead. Squeal. I don't mind. Squeal like a stuck pig. But remember this; when the Red Army reaches our frontiers, we shall take over the power together, you and we,

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if we have worked together; but if we don't come to an understanding, at the end of the war, my party will govern alone. Now you must choose.

KARSKY. I . . .

PRINCE [*to KARSKY*]. Violence won't help. We must take a realistic view of the situation.

KARSKY [*to the PRINCE*]. You're a coward; you've drawn me into a trap to save your own head.

HOEDERER. What trap? Leave us if you wish. I don't need you to come to an understanding with the Prince.

KARSKY [*to the PRINCE*]. You're not going to . . .

PRINCE. What's the matter? If you don't like the coalition, we don't force you to join, but my decision doesn't depend on yours.

HOEDERER. It goes without saying that the alliance of our Party with the Regent's government will put the Pentagon in an awkward situation during the last months of the war; it goes without saying, too, that we should set about its complete liquidation when the Germans are beaten. But since you want to keep your hands clean . . .

KARSKY. For three years we've fought for the independence of our country. Thousands of our young men have died for our cause. We have earned the admiration of the world, all so that the German party can join the Russian party and cut our throats on a dark night.

HOEDERER. Don't sentimentalize, Karsky; you have lost because you had to lose. 'Illythia, Illythia alone . . .' It's a slogan that can't do much to protect a small country surrounded by powerful neighbours. [*Pause.*] Do you accept my conditions?

KARSKY. I am not qualified to accept; I am not alone.

HOEDERER. I'm in a hurry, Karsky.

PRINCE. My dear Hoederer, we could perhaps give him time to think things over. The war isn't finished, we aren't down to our last week.

HOEDERER. I'm down to my last week. Karsky, I'm going to trust you. I always trust people, it's one of my principles. I know you ought to consult your friends, but I know you can convince them. If you give me your acceptance in principle today, I'll talk to the other comrades of my Party tomorrow.

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HUGO [*rising abruptly*]. Hoederer!

HOEDERER. What?

HUGO. How dare you?

HOEDERER. Shut up.

HUGO. You have no right. They are . . . oh God! they're the same people. The same who came to see my father . . . the same dreary, futile faces . . . they've even followed me here. You have no right. . . . They slip in everywhere, they poison everything, they are stronger than we are. . . .

HOEDERER. Will you shut up!

HUGO. Listen to me, you two; he won't have the Party behind him if he tries to put through this union! Don't count on him to whitewash you, he won't have the Party behind him.

HOEDERER [*soothing the two others*]. Pay no attention. It's a purely personal reaction.

PRINCE. Yes, but he's making a great deal of noise. Couldn't you ask your guards to take him outside?

HOEDERER. What the hell! He can go alone! [*He rises and goes to HUGO.*]

HUGO [*retreating*]. Don't touch me. [*He puts his hand in the pocket where his gun is.*] You won't listen to me? You won't listen to me?

At this moment a loud explosion is heard. The windows blow in, the frames torn from their hinges.

HOEDERER. Down!

He seizes HUGO by the shoulders and throws him to the ground. The other two fall flat on the floor. LEON, SLICK and GEORGES rush in.

LEON. Are you hurt?

HOEDERER [*getting up*]. No. Is anyone hurt? [*To KARSKY, who has risen.*] You're bleeding.

KARSKY. It's nothing. A bit of glass.

SLICK. Hand grenade.

HOEDERER. Grenade or bomb. But they aimed short. Search the garden.

HUGO [*turned to the window, to himself*]. Bastards! Bastards!

LEON and GEORGES *jump out of the window.*

HOEDERER [*to the PRINCE*]. I was expecting something of the kind, but I'm sorry they chose this particular moment.

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PRINCE. It reminds me of my father's palace. Karsky! Is this some of your work?

KARSKY. Are you crazy?

HOEDERER. They were aiming at me; it concerns no one but myself. [*To KARSKY.*] You see; it's better to take precautions. [*Looking at him.*] You're bleeding rather a lot.

JESSICA [*entering out of breath*]. Is Hoederer dead?

HOEDERER. Your husband is all right. [*To KARSKY.*] Leon will take you up to my room and bandage you. Then we can go on with our conversation.

SLICK. You should all go upstairs, they might have another try. You can talk while Leon is doing his first-aid.

HOEDERER. Right. [*GEORGES and LEON come back through the window.*] Well?

GEORGES. Mills bomb. They threw it from the garden and then vamoosed. The wall got the worst of it.

HUGO. The bastards.

HOEDERER. Let's go upstairs. [*They go towards the door. HUGO makes to follow them.*] Not you.

They look at each other. Then HOEDERER turns and goes out.

HUGO [*between his teeth*]. The bastards!

GEORGES. What?

HUGO. The ones who threw that bomb. They're bastards. [*He goes to pour out a drink.*]

SLICK. Bit rattled, eh?

HUGO. Bah!

SLICK. No need to be ashamed. Under fire for the first time. You'll get used to it.

GEORGES. You know something: in the long run, it takes your mind off things. Isn't that true, Slick?

SLICK. Makes a change, wakes you up, stretches your legs.

HUGO. I'm not rattled. I'm angry. [*He drinks.*]

JESSICA. Angry with who, honey-bee?

HUGO. The bastards who threw that bomb.

SLICK. You're too sensitive; we've got used to it.

GEORGES. It's our bread and butter; if it wasn't for them, we shouldn't be here.

HUGO. You see, everyone is quite calm, everyone is happy, everyone is smiling. He was bleeding like a pig. He wiped his

face and smiled and said: 'It's nothing.' They are brave enough. They're the biggest sons of bitches in the world and they've got courage, just to stop you despising them through and through. [*Sadly.*] It's enough to send one mad. [*He drinks.*] Virtues and vices aren't evenly distributed.

JESSICA. You're not a coward, my soul.

HUGO. I'm not a coward, but I'm not brave either. Too nervous. I wish I could go to sleep and dream I was Slick. Look at him; two hundred pounds of flesh and a brain-pan the size of a nut. Like a whale. The nut, up there, sends out signals of pain and anger, but they get lost in the mass. They tickle him, that's all.

SLICK [*laughing*]. Hear that?

GEORGES [*laughing*]. Not bad!

HUGO *drinks*.

JESSICA. Hugo!

HUGO. Eh?

JESSICA. Don't drink any more.

HUGO. Why not? I've nothing to do. I've been relieved of my post.

JESSICA. Hoederer has given you the sack?

HUGO. Hoederer? Who's talking of Hoederer? That's the way; when you want to get something out of a chap like me, begin by trusting him. You can think what you like of Hoederer, but that man trusted me. Not everybody could say as much. [*He drinks. Then he goes up to SLICK.*] Some people send you on a confidential mission, see, you break your neck to do it and then just when you're going to bring it off, you find out they don't give a damn for you and they've had the job done by someone else.

JESSICA. Will you be quiet! You mustn't give them a recital of our private affairs.

HUGO. Private affairs? Ha! [*Derisively.*] She's wonderful!

JESSICA. He means me. For two years now he's been at me, saying I don't trust him.

HUGO. What a brain, eh? Nobody trusts me. There must be something wrong with my face. [*To JESSICA.*] Tell me you love me.

JESSICA. Not in front of them.

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SLICK. Don't mind us.

HUGO. She doesn't love me. She doesn't know what love is.
She's an angel. A pillar of salt.

SLICK. A pillar of salt?

HUGO. No, I mean a statue of ice. If you try and make love to her, she melts.

GEORGES. You don't say!

JESSICA. Come along, Hugo. Let's go home.

HUGO. Wait, I'm going to give Slick some advice. I'm very fond of Slick, I like him because he's so strong and he never thinks. Do you want some advice, Slick?

SLICK. If I can't stop you.

HUGO. Listen; don't marry too young.

SLICK. That's no risk.

HUGO. No, listen; don't marry too young. You understand what I mean, eh? Don't marry too young. Don't take on something you can't do. Afterwards, it gets too heavy. Everything is heavy. I don't know if you've noticed; it's not nice to be young. [*He laughs.*] Confidential mission. You tell me; where's the confidence?

GEORGES. What mission?

HUGO. Ah! I've been given a mission.

GEORGES. What mission?

HUGO. They're trying to make me talk, but they're wasting their time. I'm impenetrable. [*He looks in the mirror.*] Impenetrable! A dead-pan. Indistinguishable from the next man's. It ought to show, by God! It ought to show!

GEORGES. What?

HUGO. That I'm on a special mission.

GEORGES. Slick?

SLICK. Hmmm . . .

JESSICA [*calmly*]. Don't worry; he means I'm going to have a baby. He's looking in the glass to see if he looks like the father of a family.

HUGO. Wonderful! Father of a family! That's it. That's it. Father of a family. She and I understand each other without words. Impenetrable; it ought to show . . . that I'm the father of a family. There should be something. A certain expression. A taste in the mouth. A pain in the heart. [*He drinks.*] I'm

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sorry about Hoederer. And why? I'll tell you, he might have helped me. [*He laughs.*] I say; they're jabbering away upstairs and Leon is washing Karsky's dirty snout. Are you all cowards? Why don't you shoot me?

SLICK [*to JESSICA*]. Your little man shouldn't drink.

GEORGES. It doesn't suit him.

HUGO. Shoot me, I tell you. It's your job. Listen; a father of a family is never a real father. An assassin is never altogether an assassin. They're playing, you see. While a dead man is well and truly dead. To be or not to be, eh? You see what I mean. There's nothing I can *be* except a dead man with six feet of earth over my head. I tell you it's all a game. [*He stops abruptly.*] And all this is a game too. Everything! Everything I've been saying. Maybe you thought I was in despair? Not at all; I was playing at being in despair. Can we ever stop playing?

JESSICA. Are you coming with me?

HUGO. Wait. No. I don't know . . .

JESSICA [*filling his glass*]. All right, then, drink.

HUGO. Okay. [*He drinks.*]

SLICK. Not clever of you to make him drink.

JESSICA. We'll get it over quicker that way. There's nothing to do but wait.

HUGO *empties the glass*. JESSICA *refills it*.

HUGO. What was I saying? Was I talking about assassins?

Jessica and I know what that means. The truth is there's too much talking going on in here. [*He strikes his forehead.*] I only want silence. [*To SLICK.*] How lovely it must be inside your head; not a sound, a nice dark night. Why are you whirling around like that? Don't laugh; I know I'm drunk. I know I'm despicable. I'll tell you something; I wouldn't like to be in my shoes. Oh, not at all. It's not a good place to be. Stop whirling round. All you have to do is light the match. It doesn't sound much but I wouldn't want you to have to do it. The match, that's all it is. Light the match. And then everybody gets blown to hell and me with the rest. Don't have to find an alibi, nothing but silence and the dark night. Unless the dead are playing a game too. Supposing one dies and we find the dead are nothing but the living

SCENE THREE

playing at being dead? We'll see. We'll see. All you've got to do is light the match. That's the psychological moment. [*He laughs.*] Keep still, by God; or I'll have to start spinning too. [*He tries to turn round and falls into a chair.*] And there you see the benefits of a liberal education. [*His head lolls.*

JESSICA goes up to him and looks at him.]

JESSICA. It's all over. Will you help me carry him to bed?

SLICK [*looking at her and scratching his head*]. He said some pretty funny things.

JESSICA [*laughing*]. You don't know him as well as I do. Pay no attention. He was talking nonsense.

SLICK and GEORGES pick HUGO up by his feet and shoulders and

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE FOUR

The studio.

HUGO is lying on the bed, fully dressed, covered with an eiderdown. He is asleep. He moves and groans in his sleep. JESSICA is sitting beside him, motionless. He groans again; she rises and goes into the bathroom. There is the sound of running water. OLGA, hidden behind the curtains of the window, draws the curtains and looks out. She makes up her mind and goes to HUGO. She looks at him. HUGO groans. OLGA straightens his head on the pillow. JESSICA returns during this and watches them. She is holding a wet compress.

JESSICA. How charming of you! Good evening!

OLGA. Don't scream. I am . . .

JESSICA. I've no intention of screaming. Won't you sit down?

OLGA. I am Olga Lorame.

JESSICA. I know.

OLGA. Hugo has talked of me?

JESSICA. Yes.

OLGA. Is he hurt?

CRIME PASSIONNEL

JESSICA. No, he's drunk. [*Going in front of OLGA.*] Excuse me.

[*She lays the compress on HUGO's forehead.*]

OLGA. Not like that. [*She rearranges the compress.*]

JESSICA. Excuse me.

OLGA. What about Hoederer?

JESSICA. Hoederer? Do please sit down. [*OLGA sits down.*] Did you throw that bomb?

OLGA. Yes.

JESSICA. No one's dead. Better luck next time. How did you get in here?

OLGA. Through the door. You left it open when you went out. You should never leave doors open.

JESSICA [*meaning HUGO*]. You knew he was in the office?

OLGA. No.

JESSICA. But you knew he might be?

OLGA. I had to risk that.

JESSICA. With a bit of luck, you would have killed him.

OLGA. It's the best thing that could happen.

JESSICA. Really?

OLGA. The Party isn't very fond of traitors.

JESSICA. Hugo isn't a traitor.

OLGA. So I believe. But I can't make the others agree with me.

[*Pause.*] This job is taking too long; it should have been finished a week ago.

JESSICA. He has to find an opportunity.

OLGA. Opportunities are made, not found.

JESSICA. Did the Party send you?

OLGA. The Party doesn't know I'm here.

JESSICA. I see: you popped a bomb into your hand-bag and came along to throw it at Hugo to save his reputation.

OLGA. If I'd been successful, everyone would have thought he'd blown himself up with Hoederer.

JESSICA. Yes, but he would have been dead.

OLGA. No matter what way he tries to do it, there's not much chance he'll get out of it alive.

JESSICA. You do take your friendship seriously.

OLGA. Obviously much more seriously than you take your love.

[*They look at each other.*] Have you been interfering with his work?

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JESSICA. I haven't interfered with anything.

OLGA. But you haven't helped him either?

JESSICA. Why should I help him? Did he ask me before he joined the Party? When he decided he had nothing better to do with his life than try and blow up a stranger, did he consult me?

OLGA. Why should he ask your advice? What could you have said to him?

JESSICA. Nothing, obviously.

OLGA. He joined the Party; he volunteered for this mission; that should be enough for you.

JESSICA. It is not enough.

HUGO *groans*.

OLGA. He isn't well. You shouldn't have let him get drunk.

JESSICA. He'd be far worse off if your bomb had exploded in his face. [*Pause.*] What a pity he didn't marry you. He'd have stayed at home to iron your petticoats while you were busy throwing grenades all over the countryside and we'd all have been happy. [*She looks at OLGA.*] I thought you'd be tall and bony.

OLGA. With a moustache?

JESSICA. Not a moustache. A wart on the side of your nose. He always looked so important when he had been visiting you. He used to say 'We've been talking politics.'

OLGA. Naturally he never discussed them with you.

JESSICA. You don't think he married me for that. [*Pause.*] You're in love with him, aren't you?

OLGA. What's love got to do with it? You read too many novels.

JESSICA. A girl must do something with her time when she isn't interested in politics.

OLGA. Don't worry: love has no importance for women like me. We can do without it.

JESSICA. Meaning that I can't?

OLGA. Like all sentimentalists.

JESSICA. I'd rather be a sentimentalist than an intellectual.

OLGA. Poor Hugo!

JESSICA. Yes. Poor Hugo!

OLGA. Wake him up. I've got something to say to him.

CRIME PASSIONNEL

JESSICA *goes to the bed and shakes* HUGO.

JESSICA. Hugo! Hugo! There's someone to see you.

HUGO. What? [*He sits up.*] Olga! Olga! So you've come. I'm so glad to see you, you must help me. [*He sits on the edge of the bed.*] Oh, God, what a head I've got! Where are we? I'm so glad you've come. Wait: something's happened. Something awful. You can't help. You can't help me now. You threw that bomb, didn't you?

OLGA. Yes.

HUGO. Why didn't you trust me?

OLGA. Hugo, in fifteen minutes a rope will be thrown over the wall and I must go. I'm in a hurry and you must listen.

HUGO. Why didn't you trust me?

OLGA. Jessica, give me that water-bottle and glass. [*JESSICA hands them over. She fills the glass and throws the water in HUGO's face.*]

HUGO. Whew!

OLGA. Are you listening?

HUGO. Yes. [*He mops his face.*] What a head I've got! Give me a drink, will you? [*JESSICA pours out some water and he drinks.*] What do the boys think?

OLGA. That you're a traitor.

HUGO. They're going too far.

OLGA. You haven't a day to lose. The job must be finished by tomorrow evening.

HUGO. You shouldn't have thrown that bomb.

OLGA. Hugo, you insisted on taking on a difficult job and taking it on alone. I was the first to trust you, when there were a hundred reasons for refusing and I passed on my confidence to the others. But we're not playing at boy scouts. The Party wasn't created to give you opportunities for showing off. There's a job to do and it must be done; no matter by whom. If in twenty-four hours you haven't completed your assignment, someone will be sent to do it for you.

HUGO. If that happens, I'll resign from the Party.

OLGA. What are you talking about? Do you think you *can* resign from the Party? We're at war, Hugo, and our friends aren't playing games. You only leave the Party feet first.

HUGO. I'm not afraid to die.

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OLGA. It means nothing to die. But to die stupidly, after mucking everything up: or worse, like a fool that one liquidates because one is afraid of his clumsiness. Is that what you want? Was that what you wanted, the first time you came to see me, when you looked so proud and happy? Why don't you tell him? If you loved him at all, you couldn't want him to be shot down like a dog.

JESSICA. You know quite well I don't understand politics.

OLGA. Well, what do you say?

HUGO. You shouldn't have thrown that bomb.

OLGA. What's your decision?

HUGO. I'll tell you tomorrow.

OLGA. Very well. Good-bye, Hugo.

HUGO. Good-bye, Olga.

JESSICA. See you again soon, madam.

OLGA. Put out the light.

JESSICA *puts out the light*. OLGA *opens the door and goes out*.

JESSICA. Shall I put the light on again?

HUGO. Wait. She may have to come back.

They wait in darkness.

JESSICA. I could open the shutters a little, to see.

HUGO. No. [*Pause.*]

JESSICA. Are you very unhappy? [*HUGO does not reply.*] Tell me, while it's still dark.

HUGO. My head's splitting, that's all. [*Pause.*] Confidence can't be very important, when it won't outlast a week of waiting.

JESSICA. Not very important, no.

HUGO. How do you expect to live, if no one trusts you?

JESSICA. No one has ever trusted me, you less than the others. I've managed to get along.

HUGO. She was the only one who believed in me a little.

JESSICA. Hugo . . .

HUGO. The only one—I know that. [*Pause.*] She must be all right by now. You can put the light on again. [*He switches on the light. JESSICA turns away abruptly.*] What's the matter?

JESSICA. I feel funny when I look at you.

HUGO. Shall I put the light out again?

CRIME PASSIONNEL

JESSICA. No. [*She turns back to him.*] You. You, yourself, are going to kill a man.

HUGO. Do I know myself what I'm going to do?

JESSICA. Show me the gun.

HUGO. Why?

JESSICA. I want to see what it's like.

HUGO. You walked about with it the whole afternoon.

JESSICA. Yes, but then it was only a toy.

HUGO [*holding it out to her.*] Be careful.

JESSICA. Yes. [*She looks at it.*] It's funny.

HUGO. What's funny?

JESSICA. Now it frightens me. Take it back. [*Pause.*] You're going to kill a man. [*HUGO begins to laugh.*] Why are you laughing?

HUGO. You believe me? You've made up your mind to believe me?

JESSICA. Yes.

HUGO. You've picked a good time; no one else believes it.

[*Pause.*] A week ago, it might have helped. . . .

JESSICA. It isn't my fault. I only believe what I can see. Up until this morning, I couldn't even imagine he was going to die.

[*Pause.*] I came into the office just now, there was the man with the bleeding cheek and I suddenly felt you were all dead. Hoederer was dead; I saw it in his face. If you don't kill him, they'll send someone else.

HUGO. I'll do it all right. [*Pause.*] All that blood, disgusting, wasn't it?

JESSICA. Yes.

HUGO. Hoederer will bleed too.

JESSICA. Be quiet.

HUGO. He'll be lying on the floor in a silly attitude and his clothes will be covered with blood.

JESSICA [*slowly and softly*]. Be quiet, I tell you.

HUGO. She threw a bomb against the wall. Nothing to be proud of; she couldn't even see us. Anyone can kill a man if he doesn't have to see what he is doing. I was going to shoot. I was all ready. I was facing them and I was going to shoot; it was her fault I missed my moment.

JESSICA. You were really going to shoot?

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HUGO. I had my hand in my pocket and my finger on the trigger.
JESSICA. And you were going to shoot! You're sure you were going to shoot?

HUGO. I was . . . I was angry. Of course I was going to shoot. Now I've got to begin all over again. [*He laughs.*] You heard her; they say I'm a traitor. It's easy for them; back there, when they decide a man must die, it's as though they scratched a name out of the telephone book. It's clean and elegant. Here, death is a job to be done. Like in a slaughter-house. [*Pause.*] He dictates, he smokes, he talks to me about the Party, he makes plans and all I can do is think of him as a corpse. It's obscene. You've seen his eyes.

JESSICA. Yes.

HUGO. You've seen how hard and bright they are? How alive?

JESSICA. Yes.

HUGO. Maybe I shall hit him between the eyes. You aim at the stomach, you know, but the gun jerks up.

JESSICA. I like his eyes.

HUGO [*abruptly*]. It's abstract.

JESSICA. What?

HUGO. A murder. I say it's abstract. You pull the trigger, and after that you don't understand anything that happens. [*Pause.*] If only you could fire without looking. [*Pause.*] I wonder why I'm telling you all this.

JESSICA. I wonder.

HUGO. I'm sorry. [*Pause.*] If I were on that bed, dying, you wouldn't leave me, would you?

JESSICA. No.

HUGO. It's the same thing; to kill, or to die, it's the same thing; you're just as much alone. He's lucky, he'll only die once. But for ten days, I've been killing him over and over again, every minute of every day. [*Abruptly.*] What will you do, Jessica?

JESSICA. What do you mean?

HUGO. Listen; if I haven't killed him by tomorrow, I'll have to disappear, or else I'll have to go back to them. I'll say: do what you like with me. If I do kill him . . . [*he hides his face in his hands for a moment.*] What must I do? What would you do?

CRIME PASSIONNEL

JESSICA. *Me?* You ask *me* what I would do?

HUGO. Who else can I ask? I've no one in the world but you.

JESSICA. That's true. No one but me. Only me. Poor Hugo.

[*Pause.*] I'd go to Hoederer and I'd say to him: Look, I've been sent here to kill you, but I've changed my mind and I'd like to stay and work with you.

HUGO. Poor Jessica!

JESSICA. Couldn't you do that?

HUGO. That's what they call being a traitor.

JESSICA [*sadly*]. You see! I can't tell you anything. [*Pause.*] Why couldn't you do that? Because he doesn't think as you do?

HUGO. If you like.

JESSICA. And you must always kill people who don't agree with you?

HUGO. Sometimes.

JESSICA. Why did you decide to think like Louis and Olga?

HUGO. Because they are right.

JESSICA. But Hugo, supposing you had met Hoederer last year, instead of Louis. You would think his ideas were the right ones.

HUGO. You're crazy.

JESSICA. Why?

HUGO. To hear you, one would think all opinions are equal, and you can catch them like a disease.

JESSICA. I don't think that; I . . . I don't know what I think.

Hugo, he's so strong, he only has to open his mouth to make you believe he must be right. Besides, I thought he was sincere, and he was working for the good of the Party.

HUGO. I don't give a damn for what he wants or what he thinks.

The only thing that matters is what he does.

JESSICA. But . . .

HUGO. Objectively, he is acting like a social traitor.

JESSICA [*without understanding*]. Objectively?

HUGO. Yes.

JESSICA. Oh. [*Pause.*] Supposing he knew what you were planning to do, wouldn't he think you were a social traitor too?

HUGO. I don't know.

JESSICA. But would he think so?

HUGO. What difference does that make? Yes, probably.

JESSICA. Then who is right?

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HUGO. I am.

JESSICA. How do you know?

HUGO. Politics are a science. You can prove you are right and the others are wrong.

JESSICA. Then what are you waiting for?

HUGO. It would take too long to explain.

JESSICA. We've got all night.

HUGO. It would take months and years.

JESSICA. Oh! [*She goes to the books.*] And it's all written in here.

HUGO. In a sense, yes. You have to understand it, though.

JESSICA. Oh God! [*She picks up one, opens it, looks at it fascinated and puts it down with a sigh.*] Oh God!

HUGO. Now leave me alone. Go to sleep.

JESSICA. What's the matter? What have I said?

HUGO. Nothing. Nothing. I'm in the wrong; it was crazy to ask you to help. Your advice comes from another world.

JESSICA. Whose fault is that? Why has no one ever taught me anything? Never explained anything? You heard what he said? That I was your extravagance? For nineteen years I've been living in your man's world, forbidden to touch things and you've made me believe everything was doing fine and all I had to do was to put flowers in water and bring perfume into your lives. Why have you all lied to me? Why have you left me in ignorance? Then one day you inform me that the world is cracking open, you're entirely helpless and you force me to choose between a suicide and an assassination. I won't choose; I won't let you kill yourself, I won't let you kill a man. Why lay this burden on my shoulders? I don't understand your problems and I wash my hands of them. I'm not a class oppressor, nor a social traitor, nor a revolutionary. I've done nothing, I'm completely innocent.

HUGO. I don't ask anything more of you, Jessica.

JESSICA. It's too late, Hugo; you've made me a part of your plan. Now I must choose. For you and for myself; it is my life I choose with yours and I... Oh, my God! I can't go on.

HUGO. I understand.

Pause. HUGO is sitting on the bed, gazing into space. JESSICA sits down beside him and puts her arms round his neck.

CRIME PASSIONNEL

JESSICA. Don't say anything. Don't worry about me. I won't say a word; I won't stop you thinking. But I'll be with you. It's cold in the morning; you'll be glad to take a little warmth from me, it's all I can give you. Is your head still aching?

HUGO. Yes.

JESSICA. Lay it on my shoulder. Your forehead's burning. [*She strokes his hair.*] Poor head.

HUGO [*breaking away abruptly*]. That's enough!

JESSICA [*gently*]. Hugo!

HUGO. You're playing at being a mother.

JESSICA. I'm not playing. I shall never play again.

HUGO. Your body is cold and you've no warmth to give me. It isn't difficult to bend over a man, with a maternal air and stroke his hair; any child would dream of being in your place. But when I took you in my arms and asked you to be my wife, you didn't manage quite so well.

JESSICA. Don't.

HUGO. Why shouldn't I? Don't you know our love has been a farce?

JESSICA. What matters tonight isn't our love; but what you'll do tomorrow.

HUGO. It's all the same. If I had been sure . . . [*Abruptly.*] Jessica, look at me. Can you say you love me? [*He looks at her. Pause.*] You see. I won't even have had that.

JESSICA. What about you, Hugo? Do you really believe you loved me? [*He doesn't reply.*] You see. [*Pause. Abruptly.*] Why not try and convince him?

HUGO. Convince who? Hoederer?

JESSICA. You say he's wrong, you should be able to prove it to him.

HUGO. You think so? He's much too cunning.

JESSICA. How can you know your ideas are right if you can't prove them? Hugo, it would be so wonderful, you'd reconcile everybody, everybody would be delighted, you'd all work together. Try, Hugo, please try. Try at least once before you kill him.

Knock at the door. HUGO starts up and his eyes shine.

HUGO. It's Olga; she's come back! I was sure she would come back. Put the light out and open the door.

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JESSICA. You do need her, don't you?

She puts the light out and opens the door. HOEDERER enters.

HUGO *puts the light on again when the door is shut.*

JESSICA [*recognizing HOEDERER*]. Ha!

HOEDERER. Did I frighten you?

JESSICA. I'm on edge tonight. There was that bomb . . .

HOEDERER. Yes. Of course. Do you usually sit in the dark?

JESSICA. I had to. My eyes are very tired.

HOEDERER. Oh! [*Pause.*] May I sit down a moment? [*He sits in the armchair.*] Don't worry about me.

HUGO. Did you want to see me?

HOEDERER. No. No, no. You made me laugh just now; you were purple with rage.

HUGO. I . . .

HOEDERER. Don't apologize, I expected it. I'd even have been very worried if you hadn't protested. There are many things I must explain to you. But tomorrow. Tomorrow we'll have a proper talk. Today your work is over. Mine too. Funny sort of day, eh? Why don't you hang some pictures on the walls? It'd be less bare. There are some in the attic. Slick can bring them down.

JESSICA. What are they like?

HOEDERER. Etchings. All kinds. You can choose.

JESSICA. No thanks. I don't like etchings.

HOEDERER. Just as you like. Anything to drink here?

JESSICA. No, I'm sorry.

HOEDERER. Oh, well! What were you doing before I came in?

JESSICA. Just talking.

HOEDERER. Well, go on talking! Talk! Don't worry about me.

[He fills his pipe and lights it. A very heavy pause. He smiles.]

I see.

JESSICA. It's not very easy to imagine that you aren't there.

HOEDERER. You can quite well turn me out. [*To HUGO.*] You don't have to see your boss when he's got the blues. [*Pause.*]

I don't know why I came. I wasn't tired, I tried to work . . .

[Shrugs his shoulders.] A man can't work all the time.

JESSICA. No.

HOEDERER. This business is nearly over . . .

HUGO [*quickly*]. What business?

CRIME PASSIONNEL

HOEDERER. With Karsky. He's jibbing a little, but it'll go through quicker than I thought.

HUGO [*violently*]. You . . .

HOEDERER. Sh! Tomorrow! Tomorrow! [*Pause.*] When a job like this is nearly over, you feel empty, you don't know what to do next. Was your light on just now?

JESSICA. Yes.

HOEDERER. I stood at the window. In the dark, so as not to be a target. Have you seen how dark and quiet the night is? The light was showing through the cracks of your shutters. [*Pause.*] We've been very close to death.

JESSICA. Yes.

HOEDERER [*with a little laugh*]. Very close. [*Pause.*] I left my room very quietly. Slick was asleep in the corridor. Georges was asleep in the lounge. Leon was asleep in the hall. I wanted to wake them and then . . . Bah! [*Pause.*] That's all; I came here. [*To JESSICA.*] What's the matter? You look less frightened than you did this afternoon?

JESSICA. It's because of the way you look.

HOEDERER. How do you mean?

JESSICA. I didn't think you'd ever need anyone.

HOEDERER. I don't need anyone. [*Pause.*] Slick told me you were pregnant?

JESSICA [*quickly*]. It's not true.

HUGO. Really, Jessica, if you told Slick, why not tell Hoederer?

JESSICA. I was teasing Slick.

HOEDERER. [*He looks at her for a long time*]. I see. [*Pause*]. When I was a deputy in the Landtag, I lived with a man who kept a garage. In the evenings, I used to go into their dining-room to smoke. They had a radio, the children played on the floor. . . . [*Pause.*] Well, I must go to bed. It was a mirage.

JESSICA. What was?

HOEDERER [*with a movement*]. All that. You, too. We must work, that's all we can do. Telephone the village in the morning. Get someone to come and mend the window. [*He looks at HUGO.*] You look exhausted. They told me you got drunk this afternoon? Sleep well. You don't have to start work before nine.

He gets up. HUGO takes step. JESSICA throws herself between them.

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JESSICA. Hugo, do it now.

HUGO. What?

JESSICA. You promised you'd try and convince him.

HOEDERER. Convince me?

HUGO. Shut up. [*He tries to move her away. She stands in front of him.*]

JESSICA. He doesn't agree with you.

HOEDERER [*amused*]. So I've noticed.

JESSICA. He wants to explain.

HOEDERER. Tomorrow! Tomorrow!

JESSICA. Tomorrow will be too late.

HOEDERER. Why?

JESSICA [*still standing in front of HUGO*]. He . . . he says he doesn't want to be your secretary if you won't listen to him. Neither of you is tired, and you've the whole night . . . and . . . you've been very close to death, it should make you more tolerant.

HUGO. Leave it, I say.

JESSICA. Hugo, you promised me! [*To HOEDERER.*] He said you're a social traitor.

HOEDERER. A social traitor! Is that all?

JESSICA. Objectively. He said: objectively.

HOEDERER [*changing his tone and expression*]. That's enough. All right, little man, tell me what's on your mind, as we can't stop you. I must get this straight before I go to bed. Why am I a social traitor?

HUGO. Because you have no right to drag the Party into your coalition.

HOEDERER. Why not?

HUGO. Because it's a revolutionary organization and you are trying to make it a part of the government.

HOEDERER. Revolutionary parties are formed to take power.

HUGO. To *take* it. Yes. To seize it by armed force. Not to buy it by pandering to the authorities.

HOEDERER. You're disappointed by the lack of blood? I'm sorry, but you should know we could never come to power by force. If there is a civil war, the Pentagon has all the arms and the military leaders. It will be a framework for the counter-revolutionary troops.

CRIME PASSIONNEL

HUGO. Who's talking of civil war? Hoederer, I don't understand you; all you need is a little patience. You said so yourself the Red Army will drive out the Regent and we shall have all the power for ourselves.

HOEDERER. And how will we manage to keep it? [*Pause.*] When the Red Army has crossed our frontiers, I promise you there'll be a bitter period to live through.

HUGO. The Red Army . . .

HOEDERER. Yes, yes, I know. I'm waiting for it, too. Just as impatiently. But you must say to yourself: all armies in time of war, whether they come as liberators or not, are the same. They live on the country. Our peasants will hate the Russians, naturally, so why should they love us, the government the Russians have forced on them? We'll probably be called the foreign party, or worse. The Pentagon will go underground again, they won't even have to change their slogans.

HUGO. The Pentagon is . . .

HOEDERER. Then there's another thing; the country is ruined; it may even become a battlefield. No matter what government succeeds the Regent, it will have to take drastic measures which will make it very unpopular. The morning after the Red Army leaves, we would be swept away by an insurrection.

HUGO. An insurrection can be trampled out. We will establish an iron rule.

HOEDERER. An iron rule? With what? Even after the revolution, the Proletarian will be the weakest party and will stay that way for a long time. An iron rule! With a bourgeois party that will rush to sabotage all our work and a peasant population that will burn their harvest to starve us out?

HUGO. Well then? The Bolshevik Party had plenty to deal with in 1917.

HOEDERER. They weren't held in power by foreign troops. Now, listen, my boy, and try to understand; we'll take office with Karsky's liberals and the Regent's conservatives. No trouble, no arguments; a National Coalition. No one can say we've been forced into power from outside. I asked for half the seats on the Resistance Committee, but I shan't be stupid enough to ask for half the seats in the Cabinet. A minority, that's what we must be. A minority that will let the other

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parties take the responsibility for unpopular measures and that will earn its popularity by putting forward opposition from inside the government. They are cornered; in two years you'll see the bankruptcy of the liberal policy and the entire country will ask us to take over.

HUGO. And from then on the Party will be washed up.

HOEDERER. Washed up? Why?

HUGO. The Party has a programme; the realization of a socialist economy. We have one method; the exploitation of class warfare. You're going to use it for a policy of collaboration of class within the framework of a capitalist economy. For years you're going to lie, plot, manoeuvre, go from compromise to compromise; you'll justify to our comrades the reactionary measures taken by a government of which you form a part. No one will understand; the diehards will leave us, others will lose the political consciousness they've just acquired. We shall be contaminated, softened, disorientated; we'll become nationalists and reformers; and in the long run the bourgeois parties will only have to lift their little finger to liquidate us. Hoederer! The Party, it belongs to you, you can't forget all the labour we have given to forge it, the sacrifices we have had to demand, the discipline we have had to impose. I beg you on my knees; don't sacrifice it with your own hands.

HOEDERER. What a talker! If you don't want to run risks, you shouldn't play with politics.

HUGO. I don't want to run those risks.

HOEDERER. Fine; then how can you stay in office?

HUGO. Why take it?

HOEDERER. Are you crazy? A People's army is going to occupy the country and you'd let it leave without taking advantage of its help. It's an opportunity that will never happen again; I tell you we're not strong enough to have a revolution on our own.

HUGO. Power shouldn't be bought at that price.

HOEDERER. What do you want to do with the Party? Turn it into a racing-stable? What use is it to sharpen a knife every day and then never use it to cut anything? A Party is never anything but a means to an end. There is never more than one end; power.

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HUGO. There is never more than one end; to put into practice our ideals, all our ideals and nothing but our ideals.

HOEDERER. I forgot, you've still got ideals. You'll get over it.

HUGO. Do you think I'm the only one? Wasn't it for our ideals that they died, our friends who got themselves killed by the Regent's police? Do you think we won't be betraying them, if we use the Party as a means for redeeming their assassins?

HOEDERER. I don't give a damn for the dead. They died for the Party and the Party can decide as it likes. I'm working on a living programme, made by the living, for the living.

HUGO. And you think the living will accept your coalition?

HOEDERER. We'll make them swallow it by degrees.

HUGO. By lying to them?

HOEDERER. By lying to them sometimes.

HUGO. You . . . you look so *real*, so strong! It can't be true that you'd agree to lie to our comrades.

HOEDERER. Why? We are at war and it's not usual to give the troops a play-by-play description of the battle.

HUGO. Hoederer, I . . . I know better than you what it is to lie; at home everyone lied to himself, lied to me. I've only been able to breathe this last year, since I joined the Party. For the first time I've seen people who didn't lie to each other. Everyone could trust everyone else, the most unimportant member felt that the orders of the leaders revealed to him his deepest desire and if there was a difficult job to be done, one knew why one agreed to die. You can't . . .

HOEDERER. What are you talking about?

HUGO. About our Party.

HOEDERER. Our Party? But everyone has always lied a little. Like everyone else. What about you, Hugo, are you sure you have never lied, that you never do lie, that you aren't lying at this very moment?

HUGO. I've never lied to our comrades. I . . . What use would it be to fight for the liberation of mankind if you despised them enough to stuff their heads with lies?

HOEDERER. I lie when I must and I despise no one. I didn't invent the idea of lying; it was born of a society divided into classes and each of us inherited it at our birth. We shan't

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abolish lies by refusing to lie ourselves; we must use every weapon that comes to hand to suppress class differences.

HUGO. Not all methods are good.

HOEDERER. All methods are good when they are effective.

HUGO. Then what right have you to condemn the Regent's policy? He declared war on the U.S.S.R. because it was the best way of safeguarding our national independence.

HOEDERER. Do you imagine I *condemn* him? I've no time to waste. He did what any poor fool of his caste would have done in his place. We're not fighting men or a policy, but against the class which produced that policy and those men.

HUGO. And the best method you can find to carry on the fight, is to offer to share the power with them?

HOEDERER. Exactly. Today, it is the best method. [*Pause.*] How attached to your purity you are, my boy! How frightened you are of soiling your hands. All right, stay pure! Who does it help, and why did you come to us? Purity is an ideal for a fakir or a monk. You intellectuals, you bourgeois anarchists, you use it as an excuse for doing nothing. Do nothing, stay put, keep your elbows to your sides, wear kid gloves. My hands are filthy. I've dipped them up to the elbows in blood and filth. So what? Do you think you can govern and keep your spirit white?

HUGO. One day you'll all see I'm not afraid of blood.

HOEDERER. Nice red gloves—that's smart, that's elegant. It's the rest that frightens you. That's what stinks in your aristocratic little nose.

HUGO. So we're back at that; I'm an aristocrat, a bastard who's never been hungry! But I'm not alone in my opinion and that's just too bad for you.

HOEDERER. Not alone? Did you know something about my negotiations before you came here?

HUGO. N . . . no. There'd been some such idea in the air, we'd discussed it among the Party and the majority were agreed—I can swear to you they weren't aristocrats.

HOEDERER. My boy, you've got me wrong; I know them, the boys in the Party who don't agree with my policy. I can tell you they're my kind, not yours—and you'll find that out soon enough. If they disapproved of my negotiations, it was

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merely because they thought them inopportune; in other circumstances, they'd be the first to do the same. You make the whole thing a question of principle.

HUGO. Who's talking of principles?

HOEDERER. Aren't you making it a question of principles? All right. Then this should convince you. If we come to terms with the Regent, he'll stop the war. The Illythian troops will sit quietly and wait for the Russians to come and disarm them. If we break off the discussions, he'll know he's lost and he'll fight like a mad dog; hundreds of thousands of men will be wiped out. What do you say? [*Pause.*] Well? What do you say? Can you wipe out a hundred thousand men with a stroke of the pen?

HUGO [*painfully*]. You can't fight a revolution by throwing flowers. If they must die . . .

HOEDERER. Well?

HUGO. Well then, they must.

HOEDERER. You see! You see! You don't love your fellow men, Hugo. You only love your principles.

HUGO. My fellow men? Why should I love them? Do they love me?

HOEDERER. Then why did you come to us? If you don't love your fellow men, you can't fight for them.

HUGO. I joined the Party because its cause was just and I will only leave it when it has ceased to be so. As for my fellow men, it isn't what they *are* that interests me, but what they may become.

HOEDERER. And I love them for what they are. With all their squalors and all their vices. I love their voices and their warm hands, their worried looks and their desperate struggle against death and unhappiness. For me, a man more or less in the world, that's important. His life is precious. I know you, my boy, you're a destroyer. You hate men because you hate yourself; your purity is the purity of death and the revolution you dream of isn't ours; you don't want to change the world, you want to blow it apart.

HUGO [*who has risen*]. Hoederer!

HOEDERER. You can't help it; you're all alike. An intellectual is never a true revolutionary; he's only just good enough to be an assassin.

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HUGO. An assassin. Yes!

JESSICA. Hugo!

She throws herself between them. A key turns in the lock. The door opens. GEORGES and SLICK enter.

GEORGES. There you are. We've been looking everywhere.

HUGO. Who gave you my key?

SLICK. We've got keys to all the doors! Why not? We're his bodyguard!

GEORGES [*to HOEDERER*]. You scared us stiff! Slick woke up: not a sign of Hoederer. You might give us a shout when you go out after fresh air.

HOEDERER. You were asleep

SLICK [*amazed*]. So what? Since when do you leave us to sleep when you feel like waking us up?

HOEDERER [*laughing*]. I wonder what got into me? [*Pause.*] I'll go back with you. See you tomorrow, Hugo. Nine o'clock. We'll talk about this again. [*HUGO does not reply.*] Good night, Jessica.

JESSICA. Goodnight, Hoederer. [*They go out. A long pause.*] Well?

HUGO. Well? You were there—you heard him.

JESSICA. What do you think?

HUGO. What do you expect me to think? I told you he was as cunning as a fox.

JESSICA. Hugo! He was right.

HUGO. My poor darling, what do you know about it?

JESSICA. What do you know? He made you look pretty small.

HUGO. Where I'm concerned, it's easy for him. I wish he had been up against Louis; he wouldn't have got off so easily.

JESSICA. Maybe he'd have made short work of Louis too.

HUGO. What? Louis? You don't know him. He's never wrong.

JESSICA. Why not?

HUGO. Because. Because he's Louis.

JESSICA. Hugo! You're talking against yourself. I watched you while you were arguing with Hoederer; he convinced you.

HUGO. He didn't convince me at all. No one will ever convince me we ought to lie to our comrades. But if he had convinced me, it would just be another reason for killing him, because that would prove he could convince others. Tomorrow morning, I'll make an end.

CURTAIN

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SCENE FIVE

HOEDERER's office.

The two french windows, which were blown out, have been placed against the wall. The glass debris has been swept away. The window has been covered with a hanging, fixed with drawing-pins, which falls to the ground.

At the beginning of the scene, HOEDERER is standing in front of the gas-ring making coffee and smoking his pipe. There is a knock and SLICK puts his head round the door.

SLICK. The girl's here. She wants to see you.

HOEDERER. No.

SLICK. She says it's important.

HOEDERER. Okay. Let her in. [*JESSICA enters, SLICK disappears.*]

Well? [*She is silent.*] Come here. [*She is standing in front of the door with her hair hanging over her face. He goes to her.*]

I suppose you really have something to say to me? [*She nods.*] Well, say it and then get out.

JESSICA. You're always in such a hurry. . . .

HOEDERER. I work.

JESSICA. You're not working; you're making coffee. May I have some?

HOEDERER. Yes. [*Pause.*] Well?

JESSICA. Give me time. It's so hard to talk to you. You're waiting for Hugo and he hasn't even started to shave.

HOEDERER. All right. You've got five minutes to get your breath. Here's your coffee.

JESSICA. Talk to me.

HOEDERER. What?

JESSICA. While I get my breath. Talk to me.

HOEDERER. I've nothing to say to you. I don't know how to talk to women.

JESSICA. Yes, you do.

HOEDERER. Ah? [*Pause.*]

JESSICA. Last night . . .

HOEDERER. Well?

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JESSICA. I thought you were absolutely right.

HOEDERER. I? Oh. [*Pause.*] Thanks; you're very encouraging.

JESSICA. You're laughing at me.

HOEDERER. Yes.

JESSICA. It's—it's so simple. I mean I understood everything, and I entirely agree with you. [*Pause.*] What would they do with me, if I joined the Party?

HOEDERER. See if they'd let you join, first.

JESSICA. But if they did, what would they do with me?

HOEDERER. I wonder. [*Pause.*] Was that what you wanted to ask me?

JESSICA. No.

HOEDERER. Then what is it? Have you quarrelled with Hugo?
Do you want to leave?

JESSICA. No. Would you be sorry if I went?

HOEDERER. I'd be delighted. I could get on with my work.

JESSICA. You don't really mean that.

HOEDERER. No?

JESSICA. No. [*Pause.*] When you came in last night, you looked so alone.

HOEDERER. So what?

JESSICA. That's very wonderful, a man alone.

HOEDERER. So wonderful that straight away you want to keep him company. And so he isn't alone any more. It's a funny world.

JESSICA. Oh, you could still be alone with me. I'm no trouble.

HOEDERER. With you?

JESSICA. A figure of speech. [*Pause.*] Have you been married?

HOEDERER. Yes.

JESSICA. Was your wife a member of the Party?

HOEDERER. No.

JESSICA. You said a man should always marry a Party member.

HOEDERER. Exactly.

JESSICA. Was she pretty?

HOEDERER. That depended on the day and what you'd call pretty.

JESSICA. What about me? Do you think I'm pretty?

HOEDERER. Are you pulling my leg?

JESSICA [*laughing*]. Yes.

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HOEDERER. You've had your five minutes. Tell me what you want, or get out.

JESSICA. You won't hurt him, will you?

HOEDERER. Who?

JESSICA. Hugo. You like him, don't you?

HOEDERER. Cut out the sentiment! He wants to kill me, eh? Isn't that it?

JESSICA. Don't hurt him.

HOEDERER. No, I won't hurt him.

JESSICA. You . . . you knew?

HOEDERER. Since yesterday. How's he going to try?

JESSICA. What?

HOEDERER. What's he got? Grenade, revolver, assault knife? Sabre, poison?

JESSICA. Revolver.

HOEDERER. I'd rather have that.

JESSICA. When he comes this morning, he'll bring his gun.

HOEDERER. Good. Good, good. Why are you giving him away? Are you angry with him?

JESSICA. No. But . . .

HOEDERER. Well?

JESSICA. He asked me to help him.

HOEDERER. And this is how you set about it? You amaze me.

JESSICA. He doesn't want to kill you. Not in the least. He likes you much too much. But he's had his orders. He doesn't say so, but I'm sure he'd be delighted, really and truly delighted, if he were stopped from carrying them out.

HOEDERER. We'll see.

JESSICA. What are you going to do?

HOEDERER. I don't know.

JESSICA. Make Slick disarm him very gently. He's only got one revolver. If you take it away, it's all over.

HOEDERER. No. It would humiliate him. You shouldn't humiliate people. I'll talk to him.

JESSICA. You'll let him in with a gun in his pocket?

HOEDERER. Why not? I'd like to change his mind for him. There'd be a dangerous five minutes, not more. If he doesn't make his attempt this morning, he'll never do it.

JESSICA. I don't want him to kill you.

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HOEDERER. Would it worry you if I got myself killed?

JESSICA. I'd be delighted.

Knock at the door.

SLICK. It's Hugo.

HOEDERER. In a minute. [SLICK shuts the door.] Off you go—go through the window.

JESSICA. I don't want to leave you.

HOEDERER. If you stay, he'll certainly shoot. Come along, out! [*She goes out through the window, the curtain falling into place behind her*]. Bring him in. [HUGO enters. HOEDERER goes to the door and walks with HUGO to his table. He will stay close beside him, watching his movements, as he talks to him, ready to catch his wrist if HUGO reaches for his gun.] Well? Did you sleep well?

HUGO. No.

HOEDERER. You're still determined?

HUGO [*surprised*]. Determined?

HOEDERER. You told me last night you'd leave me if you couldn't make me change my mind.

HUGO. I'm quite sure.

HOEDERER. Good. All right, we'll go into that later. In the meantime, let's do some work. Sit down. [HUGO sits down.] Where were we?

HUGO [*reading his notes*]. 'According to the figures of the latest survey, the number of agricultural workers has fallen from 8 million 771 thousand in 1906 to . . .'

HOEDERER. By the way, did you know that bomb was thrown by a woman?

HUGO. A woman?

HOEDERER. Slick found her footprints in a flower-bed. D'you know her?

HUGO. How should I? [*Pause.*]

HOEDERER. Funny, wasn't it?

HUGO. Very.

HOEDERER. You don't look very amused. What's the matter?

HUGO. I'm not well.

HOEDERER. Do you want to take the morning off?

HUGO. No, let's get on.

HOEDERER. Start that sentence again.

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HUGO *goes back to his notes and begins to read.*

HUGO. 'According to the figures of the latest survey . . .'

HOEDERER *begins to laugh. HUGO looks up abruptly.*

HOEDERER. D'you know why she missed us? I'll bet she threw her bomb with her eyes shut.

HUGO. Why?

HOEDERER. Because of the noise. Women close their eyes so as not to hear; explain that how you can. They're all afraid of the noise, those little mice, if not, they'd make remarkable killers. They are simple-minded, you know: they accept ready-made ideas and believe in them like in the Good Lord. We find it much less simple to shoot a man for a matter of principle, because we're the ones who have the ideas and we know the form; we're never altogether sure we're right. Are you sure you're right?

HUGO. Sure.

HOEDERER. Anyway, you'd never make a killer. It's a question of vocation.

HUGO. Anyone could kill if the Party ordered him to.

HOEDERER. If the Party ordered you to dance a tight-rope, d'you think you could do it? A man has to be a born killer. You think too much; you'd never be able to kill a man.

HUGO. I could if I had made up my mind.

HOEDERER. You could shoot me coldly, between my two eyes, because I don't think as you do about a political question?

HUGO. Yes, if I had made up my mind, or if the Party had ordered me to.

HOEDERER. You amaze me. [HUGO *makes a move to put his hand in his pocket, but HOEDERER seizes it and quickly places it on the table.*] Supposing that hand held a gun and this finger were resting on the trigger . . .

HUGO. Let me go.

HOEDERER [*without doing so*]. Supposing I were standing in front of you, exactly as I am now and you were aiming at me . . .

HUGO. Let go and get on with this article.

HOEDERER. You are looking at me and just as you're about to fire, supposing you think: 'What if he were right all the time?' See what I mean?

HUGO. I shouldn't think. I wouldn't think of anything except that I had to fire.

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HOEDERER. You would; an intellectual's always got to think. Even before you pulled the trigger, you'd have seen all the possible consequences of your act; the work of a lifetime in ruins, a whole policy blown to pieces, no one to replace me, the Party possibly condemned never to come to power. . . .

HUGO. I tell you I wouldn't think!

HOEDERER. You couldn't stop yourself. And it would be just as well. The way you're made, if you didn't think before, the rest of your life wouldn't be time enough to think about it afterwards. [*Pause.*] Why on earth do you all want to play at being killers? They are bastards without imagination; they don't care if they do put someone to death, they have no idea what life is. I prefer men who are afraid of the death of others; it's a proof they know how to live.

HUGO. I'm not fit to live. I don't know what life is and I don't want to know. I'm out of place here and I'm in everybody's way. No one loves me, no one trusts me.

HOEDERER. I trust you.

HUGO. You?

HOEDERER. Sure. You're only a kid who's finding it difficult to grow up, but you'll make a very acceptable man, if someone helps you over the rough patches. If I escape their bombs and their grenades, I'll keep you with me and I'll help you.

HUGO. Why did you have to say that? Why say that to me today?

HOEDERER [*letting him go*]. Merely to show you, you can't knock off a man who has wits about him unless you're a specialist.

HUGO. If I'd made up my mind, I ought to be able to do it. [*As if to himself, with a kind of despair.*] I *should* be able to do it.

HOEDERER. You could kill me while I was looking at you? *They stare at each other.* HOEDERER *moves away from the table and takes a step back.*

HOEDERER. Real killers don't even know what goes on in their heads. But you, you know; could you bear to know what was going on in mine if I saw you aiming at me? [*Pause.*] [*He takes another step back.*] Would you like some coffee? [*HUGO does not reply.*] It's ready. I'll give you some.

He turns his back on HUGO and pours coffee into a cup. HUGO

risers and puts his hand in the pocket which holds the gun. One can see him struggling with himself. After a moment, HOEDERER turns round and calmly comes back to HUGO carrying the cup. He holds it out.

HOEDERER. Here. [*HUGO takes the cup.*] You'd better give me your gun. Come, hand it over. You saw I gave you your chance and you didn't take it. [*He puts his hand into HUGO's pocket and brings out the revolver.*] It's only a toy. [*He goes to his desk and throws the revolver down.*]

HUGO. I hate you!

HOEDERER *comes back to him.*

HOEDERER. No, you don't. Why should you hate me?

HUGO. You think I'm a coward.

HOEDERER. Why? You don't know how to kill, but that's no reason why you shouldn't know how to die. On the contrary.

HUGO. My finger was on the trigger.

HOEDERER. Yes.

HUGO. And I . . . [*gesture of helplessness.*]

HOEDERER. Yes. It's what I told you; it's harder than you think.

HUGO. I knew you turned your back on purpose. That's why . . .

HOEDERER. Oh, in any case . . .

HUGO. I'm not a traitor!

HOEDERER. Who's talking of traitors? That's a question of vocation too.

HUGO. They'll think I'm a traitor because I haven't done what they ordered me to do.

HOEDERER. Who's they? [*Pause.*] Did Louis send you? [*Silence.*] You won't talk; that's right. [*Pause.*] Listen: your fate is linked with mine. Since yesterday, I've held all the trumps and I'm going to save both our necks. Tomorrow I'll go to town and I'll talk to Louis. He's pretty tough, but so am I. With your pals, you'll get by. The hardest thing will be to get by with yourself.

HUGO. Hard? It won't take long. You've only got to give me back that gun.

HOEDERER. No.

HUGO. What the hell does it matter to you if I blow my brains out? I'm your enemy.

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HOEDERER. To begin with, you're not my enemy. And to go on with, you can still be useful.

HUGO. You know quite well I'm all washed up.

HOEDERER. How you talk! You wanted to prove to yourself you could be a man of action and you chose the most difficult path; like when people want to get to heaven. It's typical of your age. You didn't bring it off; fine, so what? There's nothing to prove, you know. The revolution isn't a question of merit, but of efficiency and there is no heaven. There's nothing but work to be done, that's all. And a man must do what he is fit for; so much the better if the job is easy. The best work isn't what you find hardest to do; it's what suits your style.

HUGO. I've no talent for anything.

HOEDERER. You can write.

HUGO. Write! Words! Always words!

HOEDERER. Well, why not? You've got to win. Better be a good journalist than a bad assassin.

HUGO [*hesitating, but with a sort of confidence*]. Hoederer! When you were my age . . .

HOEDERER. Well?

HUGO. What would you have done?

HOEDERER. Me? I'd have fired. But that doesn't mean it was the best thing I could have done. Besides, we're not the same kind.

HUGO. I so much want to be like you; it must be wonderful.

HOEDERER. Think so? [*With a short laugh.*] One day I'll tell you about myself.

HUGO. One day? [*Pause.*] Hoederer, I missed my chance. I know now I could never have shot you because . . . because I care for you. But don't get me wrong; I'll never agree with you on what we discussed last night, I'll never work for you and I don't want you to protect me. Not tomorrow nor any other day.

HOEDERER. Just as you like.

HUGO. Now, I must ask your permission to go. I want to think this whole thing over.

HOEDERER. You swear you'll do nothing foolish without seeing me again?

HUGO. If you like.

HOEDERER. All right, you can go. Go for a walk and come back as soon as you can. Don't forget, you're still my secretary. As long as you haven't knocked me off and I haven't fired you, you're working for me.

HUGO *goes out*.

HOEDERER [*goes to the door*]. Slick!

SLICK. Yeh?

HOEDERER. The kid's feeling upset. Watch him for me and if you have to, stop him blowing his brains out. But gently. And if he wants to come back here, later, don't stop him in the passage by pretending to announce him. Let him come and go as he pleases. We mustn't get him rattled. [*He shuts the door, turns back to the table with the gas-ring and pours out a cup of coffee. JESSICA draws aside the hanging curtain over the window and appears.*] Oh, it's you again, cyanide? Now what do you want?

JESSICA. I was sitting on the window-sill and I heard everything.

HOEDERER. So?

JESSICA. I was frightened.

HOEDERER. You could have gone away.

JESSICA. I couldn't leave you.

HOEDERER. You wouldn't have been much help.

JESSICA. I know. [*Pause.*] I could perhaps have thrown myself in front of you and stopped the bullet intended for you.

HOEDERER. Romantic soul, aren't you?

JESSICA. So are you.

HOEDERER. What?

JESSICA. You're a romantic too; so as not to humiliate him, you risked your skin.

HOEDERER. You have to risk it now and then if you want to find out what it's worth.

JESSICA. You offered to help him and he refused. You seemed to like him.

HOEDERER. So?

JESSICA. Nothing. That's all. [*They look at each other.*]

HOEDERER. Get out! [*She does not move.*] Jessica, I'm not accustomed to refuse what I am offered and I haven't touched a woman for six months. There's still time for you

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to go, but in five minutes it will be too late. Do you hear? [*She doesn't move.*] That boy has only you in the world and he's going to have to face the most terrible difficulties. He needs someone to give him courage.

JESSICA. You can give him that courage. Not me. We only manage to hurt each other

HOEDERER. You are in love.

JESSICA. Not even that. We're too much alike. [*Pause.*]

HOEDERER. When did it happen?

JESSICA. What?

HOEDERER. All that. All that, in your head?

JESSICA. I don't know. Yesterday, I think, when you looked at me and you seemed so alone.

HOEDERER. If I had known . . .

JESSICA. You wouldn't have come?

HOEDERER. I . . . [*He looks at her and shrugs his shoulders. A pause.*] Good God! If you feel you need a soul-mate, Slick and Leon are there for the asking. Why choose me?

JESSICA. I don't need a soul-mate and I haven't chosen anyone. I didn't need to choose.

HOEDERER. You're driving me mad. [*Pause.*] What are you waiting for? I've no time to bother with you. Surely you don't want me to lay you down on that divan and desert you afterwards?

JESSICA. Make up your mind.

HOEDERER. You should know . . .

JESSICA. I don't know anything. I'm neither a child nor a woman. I've lived in a dream and when anyone kissed me, it made me want to laugh. Now I'm standing here before you and I feel as if I had just woken up, and the sun is shining. You are real. A real man of flesh and blood. I'm really afraid of you and I think I shall really and truly love you. Do with me as you please; no matter what happens, I shall never reproach you.

HOEDERER. You want to laugh when you're kissed? [*JESSICA is embarrassed and hangs her head.*] Eh?

JESSICA. Yes.

HOEDERER. So you must be cold?

JESSICA. That's what they say.

HOEDERER. What do you think?

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JESSICA. I don't know.

HOEDERER. Let's see. [*He kisses her.*] Well?

JESSICA. It doesn't make me want to laugh.

The door opens. HUGO enters.

HUGO. So that was it.

HOEDERER. Hugo . . .

HUGO. Shut up. [*Pause.*] So that's why you spared me. I wondered: why didn't he have me shot or thrown out by his men? I said to myself: he can't be as mad or as generous as that. But it's all quite clear now, it was because of my wife. It's better that way.

JESSICA. Listen . . .

HUGO. Leave it, Jessica. Leave it. I'm not angry with you, and I'm not jealous either, we're not in love. But he, he very nearly caught me in his trap. 'I'll help you, I'll help you become a man.' What a fool I was! He didn't give a damn for me.

HOEDERER. Hugo, I give you my word that . . .

HUGO. Don't try to make excuses. I'm very grateful to you; this once at least you'll have given me the pleasure of seeing you at a loss. And then . . . and then . . . [*He springs to the desk, picks up the revolver and points it at HOEDERER.*] You have set me free!

JESSICA [*crying out*]. Hugo!

HUGO. Look Hoederer, I'm looking you in the eyes. I'm aiming at you, my hand isn't shaking and I don't give a damn for what you're thinking.

HOEDERER. Wait, my boy, wait. Don't play the fool. Not for a woman! [*HUGO fires three times. JESSICA begins to scream.*

SLICK and GEORGES enter.] Idiot. You've spoilt everything.

SLICK. Bastard! [*He pulls out his gun.*]

HOEDERER. Don't hurt him, any of you. [*He falls into an arm-chair.*] He was jealous.

SLICK. What do you mean?

HOEDERER. I slept with his wife. [*Pause.*] Washed up. For a woman. [*And he dies.*]

CURTAIN

EPILOGUE

EPILOGUE

OLGA'S room.

We hear their voices first, through the darkness, then little by little the light returns.

OLGA. Was that true? Did you really kill him because of Jessica?

HUGO. I . . . I killed him because I opened the door. That's all I know. If I hadn't opened that door . . . There he was, holding Jessica in his arms. He had lipstick on his chin. It was all so trivial. I had been living for so long in the depths of tragedy. It was to save my tragedy that I fired.

OLGA. Then you weren't jealous?

HUGO. Jealous? Maybe. But not of Jessica.

OLGA. Answer me and answer me sincerely. What I'm going to ask you is very important. Are you proud of what you did?

Can you justify it? Would you do it again if you had to?

HUGO. Did I even do it? I wasn't the one who fired, it was luck. If I had opened the door two minutes earlier or two minutes later, I wouldn't have found them in each other's arms, I wouldn't have fired. [*Pause.*] I had come to tell him I accepted his help.

OLGA. I see.

HUGO. Luck fired three shots, like in a bad detective novel.

When luck comes into it, you can start on the 'if's.' *If* I had stayed a little longer under the chestnut-trees; *if* I had walked to the end of the garden, *if* I had gone back to the studio. . . . But I myself, in all that, where do I come in? It's an assassination without an assassin. [*Pause.*] Often, in prison I'd ask myself: what would Olga say if she were here? What would she want me to think?

OLGA [*drily*]. And then?

HUGO. Oh, I know very well what you'd have said. You'd have said, 'Be modest, Hugo. Your reasons, your motives, we don't give a damn. We asked you to kill this man and you've killed him. It's only results that matter.' I . . . I'm not modest,

Olga. I could never separate the murder from my motives.

OLGA. It's better that way.

CRIME PASSIONNEL

HUGO. What? Is this really you, Olga? You who always told me . . .

OLGA. I'll explain. What time is it?

HUGO [*looking at his watch*]. Twenty to twelve.

OLGA. Good. There's still time. What were you saying? That you didn't understand your action.

HUGO. I rather think I understand it too well. It was a box that all keys opened. Listen, I could just as well say, if I liked, that I had killed him in a political passion, and that the rage that came over me when I opened the door, was only the tiny momentum that helped me to carry it into execution.

OLGA [*looking at him uncertainly*]. Hugo, you do believe, you do really believe you killed him for the *right* reasons?

HUGO. Olga, I can believe everything. I even ask myself sometimes if I really killed him.

OLGA. Really killed him?

HUGO. If it wasn't all a game?

OLGA. You really pulled the trigger.

HUGO. Yes. I did really move my finger. Actors on the stage can move their fingers, too. Look, watch; I move my finger, I aim at you. [*He aims at her with his right hand, the index finger crooked.*] It's the same movement. Maybe the only real thing was me. Maybe it was the bullet. Why are you smiling?

OLGA. Because you're making things much easier for me.

HUGO. I thought I was much too young; I wanted to hang a crime round my neck, like a stone. I was afraid it would be very heavy. What a fool I was. It is light, horribly light. It has no weight. Look at me. I'm older; I've spent two years in jail, I'm separated from Jessica and I shall live this odd perplexed life until the boys make up their minds to free me of it. All that is the result of my crime, eh? And yet it doesn't weigh me down. I don't even feel it. Neither round my neck, nor on my shoulders, nor in my heart. It has become my fate, you see, it will direct my life from outside, but I can neither touch it, nor see it, it doesn't belong to me. It is a fatal illness that kills painlessly. The door opened . . . I liked Hoederer, Olga. I liked him more than I have ever liked anyone in the world. I liked watching him and listen-

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ing to him. I liked his hands and his face and when I was with him all the storms inside me died down. It isn't my crime that's killing me, it's his death. [*Pause.*] Well, there it is. Nothing happened. Nothing. I spent ten days in the country and two years in jail. I haven't changed, I still talk far too much. Assassins should wear a distinctive sign. A poppy in their buttonhole. [*Pause.*] Well, what now?

OLGA. You can rejoin the Party.

HUGO. Good.

OLGA. At midnight, Louis and Charles were coming back to shoot you. I shan't let them in. I'll tell them you are fit for salvage.

HUGO [*he laughs*]. Fit for salvage! That's funny. You say that about kitchen slops too, don't you?

OLGA. You agree?

HUGO. Why not?

OLGA. Tomorrow you'll get fresh orders.

HUGO. Okay.

OLGA. Ouf! [*She lets herself sink into a chair.*]

HUGO. What's the matter?

OLGA. I'm so glad. [*Pause.*] You talked for three hours and I was afraid all the time.

HUGO. Afraid of what?

OLGA. Of what I should have to tell them. But everything's fine.

You'll come back to us and you'll do a man's work.

HUGO. You'll help me, like in the old days?

OLGA. Yes, Hugo. I'll help you.

HUGO. I'm very fond of you, Olga. You've stayed the same. So pure, so clear-cut. You were the one who taught me the meaning of purity.

OLGA. Do I look older?

HUGO. No. [*He takes her hand.*]

OLGA. I've thought of you every single day.

HUGO. Tell me, Olga.

OLGA. What?

HUGO. That parcel—it wasn't you, was it?

OLGA. What parcel?

HUGO. The chocolates.

OLGA. No. It wasn't me. But I knew they were going to send it.

CRIME PASSIONEL

HUGO. And you let them?

OLGA. Yes.

HUGO. But what did you really think?

OLGA [*showing her hair*]. Look.

HUGO. What is it? White hairs?

OLGA. They came in a night. You won't leave me again. And if there are difficult jobs, we'll get through them together.

HUGO [*smiling*]. You remember Raskolnikov?

OLGA [*starting*]. Raskolnikov?

HUGO. The pseudonym you chose for me. Oh, Olga, you didn't remember.

OLGA. Yes, I remember.

HUGO. I'll use it again.

OLGA. No.

HUGO. Why? I liked it. You said it fitted me like a glove.

OLGA. You're too well known by that name.

HUGO. Known? To whom?

OLGA [*suddenly tired*]. What time is it?

HUGO. Five to twelve.

OLGA. Listen, Hugo. Don't interrupt me. I've still something to tell you. Almost nothing. You mustn't attach too much importance to it. You . . . You'll be a little surprised at first, but you'll gradually understand.

HUGO. Yes?

OLGA. I . . . I'm glad you told me about your . . . your action. If you had been proud or merely satisfied, it would have been more difficult.

HUGO. Difficult? Difficult to do what?

OLGA. To forget.

HUGO. Forget? But Olga . . .

OLGA. Hugo! You must forget. I'm not asking very much of you; you said so yourself; you don't even know what you've done or why you did it. You aren't even sure you killed Hoederer. Well, you're on the right track, all you have to do is to go a little further. That's all. Forget it; it was a nightmare. Never mention it again; even to me. The man who killed Hoederer is dead. He was called Raskolnikov; he was poisoned by a box of liqueur chocolates. [*She strokes his hair.*] I'll find another name for you.

EPILOGUE

HUGO. What has happened, Olga? What have you done?

OLGA. The Party has changed its policy. [HUGO *looks at her fixedly.*] Don't look at me like that. Try to understand. When we sent you to Hoederer, communications with the U.S.S.R. had been interrupted. We had to choose our line alone. Don't look at me like that, Hugo! Don't look at me like that!

HUGO. Go on.

OLGA. Since then, contact has been re-established. Last winter the U.S.S.R. let us know that they wished us, for purely military reasons, to come to an understanding with the Regent.

HUGO. And you . . . you obeyed?

OLGA. Yes. We've set up a secret committee of six members with the government and the Pentagon.

HUGO. Six members. And you've got three seats?

OLGA. Yes. How do you know?

HUGO. Just an idea. Go on.

OLGA. Since then our troops have taken practically no part in any operations. We have probably saved a hundred thousand lives. Only the Germans immediately invaded the country.

HUGO. Quite. I suppose the Soviet Union also let you understand they didn't want to give the power to the Proletarian Party alone; that they would have trouble with the Allies if they did and besides, you'd be very quickly swept away by an insurrection?

OLGA. But . . .

HUGO. I feel as if I've heard all this before. So Hoederer . . . ?

OLGA. His attempt was premature and he wasn't the right man to carry out this policy.

HUGO. So he had to be killed; it's quite clear. But I suppose you have rehabilitated his memory?

OLGA. We had to.

HUGO. He'll have a statue at the end of the war, streets will be named after him in our towns and his name will be in all the history books. I'm very glad for his sake. And who was his assassin? A spy in the pay of Germany?

OLGA. Hugo . . .

HUGO. Answer me.

CRIME PASSIONNEL

OLGA. Our comrades know you belonged to us. They never believed the story of the *crime passionnel*. So we explained to them . . . as best we could.

HUGO. You lied to them.

OLGA. Lied, no. But we . . . but we're at war, Hugo. You can't always tell the whole truth to the troops. [HUGO *bursts out laughing*.] What's the matter? Hugo! Hugo!

HUGO *falls into an armchair, laughing till the tears roll down his cheeks*.

HUGO. That's what he said! That's what he said! It's farcical!

OLGA. Hugo!

HUGO. Wait, Olga, let me laugh. I haven't had a good laugh for ten years. This is a very awkward crime; no one wants to own it. I don't know why I did it and you don't know what to do with it. [*He looks at her*.] You are all alike.

OLGA. Hugo, please.

HUGO. All alike. Hoederer, Louis, you, you're all the same. You're the good kind. The toughs, the conquerors, the leaders. I'm only the one who opened the wrong door.

OLGA. Hugo, you loved Hoederer.

HUGO. I don't believe I ever loved him so much as at this moment.

OLGA. Then you must help us complete his work. [*He looks at her, she recoils*.] Hugo!

HUGO [*gently*]. Don't be afraid, Olga. I won't hurt you. But you mustn't talk. Give me a minute, just one minute to get my thoughts straight. Good. So I am fit for salvage. Fine. But all alone, naked, without any incumbrances. All I have to do is change my skin—and if I could lose my memory too, that would be better still. The crime, that isn't fit for salvage, is it? It's a mistake that couldn't matter less. We leave it where it is, in the dustbin. As for me, I change my name tomorrow. I call myself Julien Sorel, or Rastignac, or Myshkin and I work hand in hand with the members of the Pentagon.

OLGA. I'll . . .

HUGO. Be quiet, Olga. Please don't say a word. [*He thinks a moment*.] The answer's no.

OLGA. What?

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HUGO. No. I won't work with you.

OLGA. Hugo, you haven't understood. They're coming here with guns.

HUGO. I know. They're even a bit late.

OLGA. You can't let yourself be shot like a dog. You can't want to die for nothing. We'll trust you, Hugo. You'll see, you'll really be our comrade, you've proved yourself. . . .

A car engine.

HUGO. Here they are.

OLGA. Hugo, it would be criminal. The Party! . . .

HUGO. No more big words, Olga. There've been too many big words in this story and they've done a lot of harm.

The car passes.

It wasn't their car. I've time to explain. Listen: I don't know why I killed Hoederer, but I know why I should have killed him; because he was following a bad policy, because he lied to his comrades and because through him the Party might have become rotten. If I had had the courage to fire when I was alone with him in the office, he would have died for those reasons and I could think of myself without feeling ashamed. I'm ashamed of myself because I killed him . . . afterwards. And now you ask me to be even more ashamed and to decide that I killed him for nothing. Olga, what I thought of Hoederer's politics, I still think. When I was in prison, I believe you agreed with me, and that helped me. I know now that I'm alone in my opinion, but that won't make me change it.

Car engine.

OLGA. This time it's them. Listen, I can't . . . take this gun, get out through my bedroom and take your chance.

HUGO [*without taking the gun*]. You've turned Hoederer into a great man. But I loved him more than you will ever love him. If I deny my act, he becomes an anonymous corpse, a wreckage of the Party. [*The car stops.*] Killed by chance. Killed for a woman.

OLGA. Get out.

HUGO. A man like Hoederer doesn't die by accident. He dies for his ideals, for his policy, he is responsible for his own death. If I recognize my crime before you all, if I reclaim

CRIME PASSIONNEL

my name of Raskolnikov, if I agree to pay the necessary price, then he will have had the death he deserved.

Knock at the door.

OLGA. Hugo, I . . .

HUGO [*walking to the door*]. I haven't killed Hoederer yet, Olga.

Not yet. I'm going to kill him now and myself with him.

More knocking.

OLGA [*crying out*]. Go away! Go away!

HUGO [*opens the door and bows slightly*].

HUGO. Not fit for salvage.

CURTAIN

MEN WITHOUT SHADOWS

(Morts Sans Sepulture)

CHARACTERS

FRANÇOIS, *Lucie's brother*

SORBIER

CANORIS, *the Greek*

LUCIE

HENRI

JEAN

LANDRIEU

PELLERIN

CLOCHET

SEVERAL MILITIAMEN

MEN WITHOUT SHADOWS was presented at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, on 16th July, 1947, with the following cast :

FRANÇOIS

SORBIER

CANORIS

LUCIE

HENRI

JEAN

LANDRIEU

PELLERIN

CLOCHET

MILITIAMEN

Aubrey Woods

John Byron

Lyn Evans

Mary Morris

Hector Macgregor

David Markham

Philip Leaver

Sidney James

Denis Carey

Alan Tilvern

A'an Badel

The production was by Peter Brook and the settings by Rolf Gérard.

MEN WITHOUT SHADOWS

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

An attic with a dormer window set high in the wall. Miscellaneous objects scattered pell-mell; trunks, an old stove, a dressmaker's stand. CANORIS the Greek and SORBIER are sitting, one on a trunk, the other on an old stool. LUCIE sits on the stove. FRANÇOIS is walking up and down restlessly. HENRI is lying on the ground asleep. They all wear handcuffs.

FRANÇOIS. Why doesn't somebody say something?

SORBIER [*raising his head*]. What do you want us to say?

FRANÇOIS. Anything—provided it makes a noise.

Suddenly there is a burst of loud, vulgar music. It is the radio from the floor below.

SORBIER. There you are.

FRANÇOIS. Not that—that's *their* noise. [*He goes back to his restless pacing. Suddenly he stops dead.*] Ah!

SORBIER. What now?

FRANÇOIS. They can hear me; they are saying: the first's beginning to crack.

CANORIS. All right, don't crack. Sit down. Put your hands on your knees, your wrists will hurt less. And then shut up. Go to sleep. Do some thinking.

FRANÇOIS. What's the use?

CANORIS *shrugs his shoulders*. FRANÇOIS *goes back to his pacing*.

SORBIER. François!

FRANÇOIS. What?

SORBIER. Your shoes squeak.

FRANÇOIS. I know. I'm doing it on purpose. [*Pause. Then he stops in front of SORBIER.*] What are you thinking?

SORBIER [*lifting his head*]. Do you really want to know?

FRANÇOIS [*meets his gaze and falls back a step*]. No. Don't tell me.

SORBIER. I'm thinking about the kid who screamed.

MEN WITHOUT SHADOWS

LUCIE [*coming out of her dream abruptly*]. Which kid?

SORBIER. The little girl at the farm. I heard her screaming as they took us away. The stairs were on fire.

LUCIE. The little girl at the farm! Oh, God! I didn't know.

SORBIER. Lots of people died in that fire. Women and children.

I didn't hear them. But that kid. . . . I can still hear her screaming.

LUCIE. She was only fourteen. It's our fault she's dead.

SORBIER. It's our fault they are all dead.

CANORIS [*to FRANÇOIS*]. You see, it's much better not to talk.

FRANÇOIS. What of it? We can't last much longer either.

Perhaps they're the lucky ones.

SORBIER. They weren't ready to die.

FRANÇOIS. Am I? It wasn't our fault we failed.

SORBIER. Yes, it was.

FRANÇOIS. We were only obeying orders.

SORBIER. Maybe.

FRANÇOIS. They told us: go up and take the village. We told them: it's ridiculous—the Huns will be warned in twenty-four hours. They said: attack all the same. So we said: okay.

And we attacked. Was it our fault?

SORBIER. We should have succeeded.

FRANÇOIS. We couldn't possibly.

SORBIER. I know. We should have succeeded all the same.

[*Pause.*] Three hundred. Three hundred people who weren't ready to die, and who died for nothing. They are lying between the stones, rotting slowly in the sun. It's our fault. It's our fault that there is nothing left in this village but soldiers, dead bodies and stones. It's terrible to die with those cries still ringing in my ears.

FRANÇOIS [*shouting*]. Shut up! We don't want to hear about your dead bodies. I'm the youngest—I was only carrying out orders. I don't want to die—I don't want to die!

LUCIE [*gently—from beginning to end of the preceding scene she has maintained her control*]. François!

FRANÇOIS [*disconcerted—in a softened voice*]. What?

LUCIE. Come and sit here, little brother. [*He hesitates. She repeats even more gently.*] Come! [*He sits down. She passes*

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

her chained hands awkwardly over his face.] How hot you are! Where's your handkerchief?

FRANÇOIS. In my pocket. I can't get at it.

LUCIE. This one?

FRANÇOIS. Yes.

LUCIE *puts a hand into the pocket of his jacket, draws out a handkerchief with some difficulty and wipes his face.*

LUCIE. You're soaking wet, and you're shaking all over. You shouldn't walk so much.

FRANÇOIS. If only I could get my coat off . . .

LUCIE. It's impossible, so don't think about it. [*He pulls on his handcuffs.*] Keep still—breathe deeply. You see: I am quiet, I'm saving myself.

FRANÇOIS. Saving yourself? What for? To scream later on? There's so little time left. I want to be everywhere at once. [*He tries to get up.*]

LUCIE. Sit still.

FRANÇOIS. I must keep moving. As soon as I stop, my thoughts go round and round. I don't want to think.

LUCIE. Poor darling.

FRANÇOIS [*he lets himself slip down against her knees*]. Lucie—it's awful. I can't look at your faces, they frighten me.

LUCIE. Put your head on my knees. Yes, it's very hard, and you are so young. If only someone could still smile and say, poor little François. I used to be able to look after you. My little François—my poor little François. [*She straightens herself abruptly.*] I can't. Grief has dried me up inside. I can't cry any more.

FRANÇOIS. Don't leave me. I'm ashamed of my own thoughts.

LUCIE. Listen. There's someone who can help you. . . . I'm not really alone. . . . [*Pause.*] Jean is with me.

FRANÇOIS. Jean?

LUCIE. They didn't catch him. He's on the road to Grenoble by now. Tomorrow, he'll be the only one of us left.

FRANÇOIS. And then?

LUCIE. He'll find the others—they'll begin again somewhere else. And then the war will be over. They will live quietly in Paris, with real pictures on real identity cards, and people will call them by their real names.

MEN WITHOUT SHADOWS

FRANÇOIS. All right. He's lucky. What's that got to do with me?

LUCIE. He's walking through the forest now. There are poplars on both sides of the road. He is thinking of me. He is the only person left in the world who thinks of me. He's thinking of you, too. He's sorry for you. Try to see yourself with his eyes. He can even cry. [*She cries.*]

FRANÇOIS. So can you.

LUCIE. I'm crying with his tears.

Pause. FRANÇOIS gets up abruptly.

FRANÇOIS. That's enough—you'll make me hate him.

LUCIE. You used to love him.

FRANÇOIS. Not the way you loved him.

LUCIE. No. Not the way I loved him.

Footsteps in the corridor. The door opens. LUCIE gets up quickly.

The MILITIAMAN looks in at them, then he shuts the door again.

SORBIER [*shrugging his shoulders*]. They're having a wonderful time. Why did you get up?

LUCIE [*sitting down again*]. I thought they had come for us.

CANORIS. They won't come so soon.

LUCIE. Why not?

CANORIS. They believe waiting demoralizes. What a mistake!

SORBIER. Mistake? It's not funny to wait and imagine things.

CANORIS. Of course not. But it gives you time to get a grip on yourself. The first time it happened to me was in Greece, under Metaxas. They arrested me at four o'clock in the morning. If they'd pressed me a little, I'd have talked. Out of sheer surprise. They didn't ask me a thing. Ten days later, they tried everything, but it was too late; the surprise had worn off.

SORBIER. Did they beat you up?

CANORIS. Uh-huh.

SORBIER. Fists?

CANORIS. Fists, and feet.

SORBIER. Did you . . . did you want to talk?

CANORIS. No. As long as they hit you, it's all right.

SORBIER. Oh? . . . Oh, it's all right? . . . [*Pause.*] But if they hit you on the shins, or the elbows?

CANORIS. No, no. It's all right. [*Gently.*] Sorbier.

SORBIER. What?

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

CANORIS. You mustn't be afraid of them. They have no imagination.

SORBIER. I'm afraid of myself.

CANORIS. Why? We've nothing to tell them. Everything we know they know. Listen. [*Pause.*] It's not in the least like you think.

FRANÇOIS. What's it like?

CANORIS. I can't really say. For instance, the time went very quickly. [*He laughs.*] My teeth were so tightly clenched I couldn't open my mouth for three hours. One bastard wore old-fashioned boots. With pointed toes. He kicked me in the face. It was at Nauplia. Some women were singing under the window. I've always remembered that song.

SORBIER. Nauplia? What year?

CANORIS. '36.

SORBIER. I was there then. I came to Greece in the Théophile Gautier. On a camping tour. I saw the prison. There are fig trees growing against the wall. So you were inside and I was outside? [*He laughs.*] What a coincidence!

CANORIS. Yes!

SORBIER [*abruptly*]. Suppose they mess you up?

CANORIS. What?

SORBIER. Mess you up with their instruments? [CANORIS *shrugs his shoulders.*] I think I'd be able to force myself to hold out. Each minute, I'd say to myself, I'll hold out for another minute. Is that a good method?

CANORIS. There are no methods.

SORBIER. What did you do?

LUCIE. Can't you keep quiet? Look at the kid. Do you think you're being any help to him? Just wait and see, they'll soon show you what to do.

SORBIER. Leave us alone! He can stuff up his ears, if he doesn't want to listen.

LUCIE. What about me? Must I stuff my ears too? I don't want to listen to you because I don't want to despise you. Do you need words to give you courage? I've seen animals die, and I want to die like them—in silence.

SORBIER. Who's talking of dying? We're talking about what they'll do to us *first*. We must be ready for them.

MEN WITHOUT SHADOWS

LUCIE. I don't want to be ready. Why should I go through the whole thing twice? Look at Henri; he's asleep. Why not go to sleep too?

SORBIER. Sleep? And have them wake me up? I won't. I've no time to lose.

LUCIE. Then think about something you like. I'm thinking about Jean, and my life, and François. That time he was ill at the hotel in Arcachon, and I looked after him. From my window I could see pine trees, and great green waves on the sea.

SORBIER [*ironically*]. Waves on the sea, really? I tell you I've no time to lose.

LUCIE. Sorbier, I don't know you any more.

SORBIER. I'm all right! It's my nerves. I'm as nervous as a school-girl. [*He rises and goes to her.*] Everyone must defend himself as best he can. I'm no good when I'm caught off my guard. If I could only feel the pain a little in advance, just to be able to recognize it—I'd feel more sure of myself. It's not my fault. I've always been very methodical. [*Pause.*] I like you. But I feel very much alone. [*Pause.*] If you'd like me to keep quiet . . .

FRANÇOIS. Let them talk. It makes a noise.

LUCIE. Do as you please. [*A silence.*]

SORBIER [*more softly*]. Hey, Canoris! [*CANORIS lifts his head.*] Have you met any of them? I mean, anyone who has squealed?

CANORIS. Yes, I have met them.

SORBIER. Well?

CANORIS. What's it got to do with you? We've nothing to squeal about.

SORBIER. I want to know. Could they stand it?

CANORIS. Depends. One tried to shoot himself with a shot-gun. It went off in his face and all he did was blind himself. I used to meet him in the streets of the Piraeus, being led about by a fat Armenian woman. He thought he had paid the penalty. We shot another during a fair, just as he was buying some Turkish Delight. Ever since he got out of prison he'd developed a passion for Turkish Delight.

SORBIER. Lucky bastard.

CANORIS. Hm!

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

SORBIER. If I broke down and squealed, I don't think I could console myself with sweets.

CANORIS. No one can tell until they've been through it.

SORBIER. I think I'd choose the shot-gun.

FRANÇOIS. I'd take the Turkish Delight.

SORBIER. François!

FRANÇOIS. How do you mean, François! Did you warn me when I came to you in the first place? You told me, the Resistance has need of men, you didn't tell me it needed heroes. I'm no hero—I tell you! I did as I was told, that's all. I distributed pamphlets and guns, and you said I was always good-tempered. But no one told me what to expect in the end. I swear I had no idea what I was letting myself in for.

SORBIER. Of course you knew. You knew René was tortured.

FRANÇOIS. I never thought about it. [*Pause.*] That kid who died up at the farm, you're sorry for her. You say, it's our fault she's dead. But if I talk, when they burn me with their cigars, you'll say—he was a coward, and you'll offer me a shot-gun. Or you'll shoot me in the back. But I'm only two years older than she was.

SORBIER. I was speaking for myself.

CANORIS [*going up to FRANÇOIS*]. You have no duty to anyone, François. No duty, no responsibilities. We know nothing, it's nothing to do with us. Each man must do what he can and suffer as little as possible. The method doesn't matter.

FRANÇOIS *grows gradually calmer, but he remains lying down.*
LUCIE *hugs him to her.*

SORBIER. The method doesn't matter. . . . Obviously. Scream, cry, ask their pardon, search your memory to find something to confess, someone to betray. What does it matter, nothing is any good. You won't find anything to say. All our little squalors will remain strictly confidential. Perhaps it's better like that. [*Pause.*] I'm not sure.

CANORIS. What do you want? To know a name, or a date, so that you can refuse to tell them?

SORBIER. I don't know. I don't even know if I could keep silent.

CANORIS. So?

SORBIER. I want to know myself. I knew they'd end by catching me, and one day I'd be up against a wall, face to face with

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myself, absolutely helpless. I used to say, will you be able to stand it? It's my body that worries me, you see. I've a miserable body, badly made, with nerves like a woman. Well, the moment has come. They're going to use their instruments on me. But I've been cheated. I'm going to suffer for nothing, and I shall die without finding out what I'm worth.

The music stops. They all start, and then listen intently.

HENRI [*waking abruptly*]. What is it? [*Pause.*] The polka is over, it's our turn to dance.

The music starts again.

HENRI. False alarm. Funny how they seem to like music. [*He gets up.*] I dreamt I was dancing. At Schéhérazade. You know, the night-club in Paris. I've never been there. [*He wakes up slowly.*] Ah! . . . there you are . . . there you all are. . . . Want to dance, Lucie?

LUCIE. No.

HENRI. Are your wrists sore, too? The flesh must have swollen while I was asleep. What time is it?

CANORIS. Three o'clock.

LUCIE. Five o'clock.

SORBIER. Six o'clock.

They laugh.

CANORIS. We don't know.

HENRI. Where's your watch.

CANORIS. They broke it on my wrist. We know one thing. You slept for a long time.

HENRI. Time stolen from me. [*To CANORIS.*] Give us a hand. [*CANORIS bends down, HENRI climbs on his back and lifts himself up to the dormer window.*] It's five o'clock by the sun. Lucie was right. [*He drops down again.*] The Town Hall is still burning. Sure you don't want to dance? [*Pause.*] I loathe that music.

CANORIS [*indifferently*]. Bah!

HENRI. They must be able to hear it up at the farm.

CANORIS. No one there to hear it.

HENRI. I know. The music slips through the window, and slides over the corpses. Music, sunshine, curtain. And the bodies are all black. Ah! We made a nice mess of things. [*Pause.*] What's the matter with the kid?

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LUCIE. He's not well. He hasn't slept for eight days. How did you manage to sleep?

HENRI. It just happened. I felt so lonely I fell asleep. [*He laughs.*] We're forgotten. Forgotten by the whole world. [*Going to FRANÇOIS.*] Poor kid . . . [*He caresses his hair, then stops abruptly. To CANORIS.*] What have we done?

CANORIS. I don't know. What does it matter?

HENRI. Someone committed a crime. I feel guilty.

SORBIER. You, too? I'm glad. I thought I was the only one.

CANORIS. Fine—I feel guilty too. What difference does it make?

HENRI. I don't want to die in the wrong.

CANORIS. Don't worry. I'm sure the boys don't hold anything against you. They'll just think we had bad luck.

HENRI. I don't give a damn for the boys.

CANORIS [*shocked, drily*]. Then what do you want? A confessor?

HENRI. To hell with all confessors. I don't have to account to anyone but myself now. [*Pause, as if to himself.*] Things shouldn't have turned out like this. If I could discover my crime . . .

CANORIS. It'd help you a lot.

HENRI. I could at least face up to it and say: that's why I'm dying. Good God! A man can't die like a rat, for nothing, without a protest.

CANORIS [*shrugging his shoulders*]. Bah!

SORBIER. Why shrug your shoulders? He has the right to save his death—it's all he's got.

CANORIS. Of course. Let him save it, if he can.

HENRI. Thanks for the permission. [*Pause.*] You'd better get on with saving your own: we haven't much time.

CANORIS. Mine? Why? Who would it help? It's a strictly personal affair.

HENRI. Yes. Strictly personal. So?

CANORIS. I've never been able to interest myself in personal affairs. Neither mine nor anyone else's.

HENRI [*without listening to him*]. If only I could say to myself, I did what I could. But it's probably too much to ask. We've done something. I feel guilty. For thirty years, I've felt guilty of something. Guilty of being alive. Just now, houses are burning because of me, innocent people are dead, and

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I am going guilty to my grave. My whole life has been one long mistake.

CANORIS [*getting up and going to him*]. You're not very modest, Henri.

HENRI. What do you mean?

CANORIS. You're torturing yourself because you aren't being modest. I think we've been dead for a long time, from the moment we stopped being useful. All that's left to us is a little posthumous existence, a few hours to kill. There's nothing for you to do but kill time and gossip with your neighbours. Let yourself go, Henri, relax. You can let yourself go because there's nothing more we can do. We don't matter any more. We are completely useless. [*Pause.*] For the first time in my life I realize I've earned the right to rest.

HENRI. For the first time in three years I've been able to face up to myself. They gave me their orders. I obeyed them, and I felt justified. Now, no one can give me orders, and nothing can justify me any more. A little bit of superfluous life; yes. Just time to think about myself. [*Pause.*] Canoris, why are we dying?

CANORIS. Because we were given a difficult job and we had bad luck.

HENRI. Yes. That's what the boys will say. That's what they'll say in the official reports. But what do you think?

CANORIS. I don't think. I lived for the cause, and I always knew I'd die like this.

HENRI. You lived for the cause, fine. But don't tell me you're dying for it. Maybe, if we'd been successful and died on the job then, maybe . . . [*Pause.*] We're dying because we were given stupid orders, because we carried them out badly, and our death isn't helping anyone. The cause didn't want us to attack this village. It didn't want it, because it was an impossible job. The cause never gives orders, never says anything; we have to decide what it wants. Don't talk about the cause. Not here. While we could still work for the cause, it's all right. Afterwards, we must keep our mouths shut, and above all, not use the cause as a personal consolation. The cause has rejected us because we are no longer useful. Others will be found to serve it. In Tours, in Lille, in Carcassonne,

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

women are having babies who will replace us. We tried to justify our existence and we have failed. So now we are going to die, and we cannot justify our deaths.

CANORIS [*indifferently*]. If you like. Nothing that happens between these four walls has any importance. Hope or despair, nothing can come of it. [*Pause.*]

HENRI. If only there were something we could do. Or if we had something to hide! [*Pause. To CANORIS.*] Got a wife?

CANORIS. Yes. In Greece.

HENRI. Think of her much?

CANORIS. I try. It's very far away.

HENRI [*to SORBIER*]. What about you?

SORBIER. Only my parents. They think I'm in England. Just now, they'll be having supper. They always have it early. If only I could believe that they will feel something, in their hearts, some kind of presentiment. But I'm sure they're perfectly happy. They'll wait for me for years, more and more peacefully, and I shall die in their hearts without their noticing. My father will be talking about his garden. He always talks about the garden at supper-time. Later on, he'll go out and water the cabbages. [*He sighs.*] Poor old man. Why did I think of him? It doesn't help.

HENRI. No. It doesn't help [*Pause.*] All the same, I wish my people were still alive. I've got nobody.

SORBIER. No one at all?

HENRI. No one.

LUCIE [*with conviction*]. You're being unfair. You've got Jean.

We've all got Jean. He is our leader, and he is thinking of us.

HENRI. He's thinking of you because he loves you.

LUCIE. All of us.

HENRI [*gently*]. Lucie! How often did we talk about our dead?

We had no time to bury them, even in our hearts. [*Pause.*]

No. I shan't be missed anywhere, I leave no gap. The underground is crammed, the restaurants crowded. I shall slip out of this world and still leave it full. Like an egg. I've got to realize that I'm not indispensable. [*Pause.*] I wish I could be indispensable. To something, or to someone. [*Pause.*] Incidentally, Lucie, I love you. I can tell you now because it doesn't matter any more.

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LUCIE. No, it doesn't matter.

HENRI. That's that. [*He laughs.*] There was really no point in my being born.

The door opens. Several militiamen come in.

SORBIER. Good evening. [*To HENRI.*] They did that three times while you were asleep.

MILITIAMAN. Are you the one called Sorbier? [*Pause.*]

SORBIER. That's right.

MILITIAMAN. Come with me.

Fresh silence.

SORBIER. Oh well, I'm just as glad they're beginning with me. [*Pause. He walks to the door.*] I wonder if I'm going to know myself. [*As he goes out.*] It's time for my father to water his garden.

He goes out, the militiamen following. The key turns in the lock. Another long silence.

HENRI [*to CANORIS*]. Give us a cigarette.

CANORIS. That was my last one.

HENRI. Hell. [*The gramophone plays a rumba.*] They want us to dance. How about it, Lucie?

LUCIE. I told you no.

HENRI. Just as you like. Plenty of partners. [*He goes to the dressmaker's stand, raises his chained hands, and slides them over the shoulders and hips of the stand. Then he begins to dance, holding it against him. The music comes to an end. HENRI stops, puts the stand down, and slowly raises his arms to free himself.*] They've begun.

They all listen.

CANORIS. Hear anything?

HENRI. No.

FRANÇOIS. What do you think they're doing to him?

CANORIS. I don't know. [*Pause.*] I hope he holds out. If not, he'll suffer far more.

HENRI. Of course he'll hold out.

CANORIS. I hope so, it's much more difficult when you've nothing to hide. [*Pause.*]

HENRI. He hasn't screamed yet. That's something.

FRANÇOIS. Perhaps they're just questioning him.

CANORIS. You think so?

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

SORBIER *screams. They all jump.*

LUCIE [*talking very fast, in an unnatural voice*]. Jean must have arrived at Grenoble by now. I'd be very surprised if it took him more than fifteen hours. He must feel very strange; the town is quiet, there are people on the terraces of the cafés, and the Vercors must seem like a dream. [SORBIER'S *cries intensify*—LUCIE'S *voice grows louder*.] He's thinking of us. He hears the radio through an open window, the sun is shining down on the mountains. It's a lovely summer afternoon. [*Louder cries.*] Ha! [*She slips down on to a trunk and sobs, as she repeats.*] A lovely summer afternoon.

HENRI [*to CANORIS*]. I shan't scream.

CANORIS. You're wrong. It helps.

HENRI. I can't bear the idea of your hearing me, and of her weeping overhead.

FRANÇOIS *begins to tremble.*

FRANÇOIS [*on the verge of a breakdown*]. I can't bear it, I can't bear it another minute, I tell you.

Footsteps in the corridor.

CANORIS. Shut up. Someone's coming.

HENRI. Whose turn?

CANORIS. Yours or mine. They'll keep the girl and the kid to the last. [*The key turns in the lock.*] I hope it's me. I don't like other people's screams.

The door opens, and JEAN is pushed into the room. He has no handcuffs. He half-closes his eyes as he comes in to get used to the darkness. They all turn towards him. The militiaman goes out, closing the door behind him.

LUCIE. Jean!

JEAN. Be quiet. Don't say my name. Come here, against the wall, they may be watching us. [*He looks at her.*] It's you! It's really you! I thought I would never see you again. Who else is here?

CANORIS. Canoris.

HENRI. Henri.

JEAN. I can hardly see you. Pierre and Jacques are . . . ?

HENRI. Yes.

JEAN. The kid is here too? Poor little devil. [*Rapidly, in a low voice.*] I hoped you were all dead.

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HENRI [*laughing*]. We did our best.

JEAN. I'm sure you did. [*To LUCIE.*] What's the matter?

LUCIE. Oh! Jean, it's all over. I was thinking . . . he has reached Grenoble, he is walking down the streets, he can see the mountains. . . . And . . . And . . . now everything is over.

JEAN. Don't cry. I've every chance of getting away.

HENRI. How did they catch you?

JEAN. They haven't yet. I stumbled on one of their patrols down there, on the road to Verdone. I said I had come from Cimiéro.

HENRI. From Cimiéro?

JEAN. It's a little town, further down the valley. They brought me back, while they sent to see if I was telling the truth.

LUCIE. But at Cimiéro, they'll find out.

JEAN. It's all right; I've got friends there who'll know what to say. I'll get clear. [*Pause.*]

FRANÇOIS. You can't possibly get away.

JEAN. I must get away; the boys haven't been warned that the attack failed.

HENRI [*whistles*]. Exactly. [*Pause.*] Well, what do you say? Did we make a big enough mess of things?

JEAN. We can start again somewhere else.

HENRI. You mean, you can start again.

Footsteps in the corridor.

CANORIS. Come away from him. They mustn't see us talking to him.

JEAN. What is it?

HENRI. They're bringing Sorbier back.

JEAN. Oh, so they . . .

HENRI. Yes. They began with him.

The Militiamen come in, supporting SORBIER, who collapses against a trunk. The Militiamen go out again.

SORBIER [*without noticing JEAN*]. Did they keep me long?

HENRI. Quite a while.

SORBIER. You're right, Canoris. The time does go quickly. Did you hear me scream? [*They do not reply.*] Of course you heard.

FRANÇOIS. What did they do to you?

SORBIER. You'll see. You'll soon see. No need to be in such a hurry.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

FRANÇOIS. Is it . . . is it very bad?

SORBIER. I don't know. But I can tell you this. They asked me where Jean was, and if I'd known, I'd have told them. [*He laughs.*] You see: I know myself now. [*They are silent.*] What's the matter? [*He follows their gaze. He sees JEAN, standing against the wall, his arms outstretched.*] Who is it? Is it Jean?

HENRI [*quickly*]. Shut up. They think he's just someone from Cimiéro.

SORBIER. From Cimiéro? [*He sighs.*] Just my luck.

HENRI [*surprised*]. What did you say?

SORBIER. I said: just my luck. Now I have got something to hide from them.

HENRI [*almost happily*]. That's true. Now we've all got something to hide.

SORBIER. I wish to God they'd killed me.

CANORIS. Sorbier! I swear to you that you won't tell them. You *couldn't* tell them.

SORBIER. I tell you I'd have betrayed my own mother. [*Pause.*] It's all wrong that one moment can destroy your whole life.

CANORIS [*gently*]. It takes much more than a moment. Do you think a moment's weakness can destroy the hour when you decided to give up everything and come with us? What about these three years of courage and patience? And the day you carried the kid's rifle and equipment, although you were half-dead yourself?

SORBIER. Stop making excuses. At last I know. At last I know what I really am.

CANORIS. What you really are? Why should you be more yourself today when they beat you, than yesterday when you wouldn't drink so that Lucie could have your share? We aren't meant to live always at the limit of our strength. Even in the valleys there are pathways.

SORBIER. If I had squealed just now, would you have been able to look me in the face?

CANORIS. You won't squeal.

SORBIER. But if I had? [*CANORIS is silent.*] You see. [*Pause. He laughs.*] Lots of people die in their beds, with a clear conscience. Good sons, good husbands, good citizens, good

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fathers. . . . Ha! They are cowards like me and they'll never know it. They're just lucky. [*Pause.*] Make me shut up! Why don't you make me shut up?

HENRI. Sorbier, you are the best of us.

SORBIER. Liar!

Footsteps in the corridor. They are all quiet. The door opens.

MILITIAMAN. Which one is the Greek?

CANORIS. I am.

MILITIAMAN. Come on.

CANORIS *goes out with the MILITIAMAN.*

JEAN. He's going to suffer for me.

HENRI. Just as well it's for you, otherwise it would be for nothing.

JEAN. When he comes back, how can I bear to look at him?

[*To LUCIE.*] Do you hate me?

LUCIE. Do I look as though I hate you?

JEAN [*she gives him her manacled hands*]. I'm ashamed not to have handcuffs too. So here you are! And I thought everything was over. No more fear, no more hunger, no more pain. And here you are! They'll come for you soon, and when they bring you back, they'll be half-carrying you.

LUCIE. There will be nothing in my eyes but love for you.

JEAN. I will have to hear your cries.

LUCIE. I'll try not to scream.

JEAN. But the kid will scream. I'm sure he'll scream.

FRANÇOIS. Shut up! Shut up! Shut up! Do you want to make me mad? I'm not a hero, and I don't want to be martyred because of you.

LUCIE. François!

FRANÇOIS. Go to hell. I don't sleep with him. [*To JEAN.*] I hate you, if you want to know.

Pause.

JEAN. You're quite right. [*He goes towards the door.*]

LUCIE. Jean!

HENRI. Hey! What are you doing?

JEAN. I'm not in the habit of sending my people to die in my place.

HENRI. Who's going to tell the boys the attack failed?

JEAN *stops.*

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

FRANÇOIS. Let him alone! If he wants to give himself up . . .

HENRI [*to JEAN, without paying any attention to FRANÇOIS*]. It'll be a pretty thing when they get here, thinking that we still hold the village. [*JEAN turns back, his head lowered.*] Much better give me a cigarette. [*JEAN gives him a cigarette.*] Give one to the kid too.

FRANÇOIS. Leave me alone. [*He withdraws to the farthest part of the room.*]

HENRI. Give us a light. [*JEAN lights the cigarette. HENRI draws two puffs, then sobs nervously once or twice.*] It's all right. I like smoking, but I didn't realize it could give so much pleasure. How many have you got left?

JEAN. One.

HENRI [*to SORBIER*]. Here.

SORBIER *takes the cigarette without a word, and takes a few puffs, then passes it back. HENRI turns to JEAN.*

HENRI. I'm glad you're here. First, because you've given me a cigarette, and second because you will be a witness. To die without witnesses is real annihilation. You can go and see Sorbier's parents, and you can write to Canoris's wife.

LUCIE. Tomorrow, you'll go back to the town. You'll take with you the last living sight of me, you will be the only person in the world to know how I looked. You mustn't forget me. I am you. If you live, I live.

JEAN. Forget you . . . [*He goes towards her. Footsteps outside.*]

HENRI. Stay where you are and shut up. They're coming. It's my turn. I must be quick, or I won't have time to finish. Listen; if you hadn't come, we'd have suffered like animals, without knowing why. But you have come, and now everything has got a meaning. We can fight. Not for you alone, but for all the boys. [*Pause.*] I thought I was finished, but I see I might still be useful. With a bit of luck, I might even feel I'm not dying for nothing.

The door opens. CANORIS appears, supported by two militiamen.

SORBIER. He didn't make a sound, did he?

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

SCENE 2

A school-room. Desks and benches. Whitewashed walls. On the back wall, a map of Africa and a photograph of Pétain. The scene is very dark. Window on the left. Door up-stage. A radio on the table, under the window.

CLOCHET, PELLERIN and LANDRIEU are discovered.

CLOCHET. Shall we go on to the next?

LANDRIEU. Just a minute. Give us time for some grub.

CLOCHET. Eat if you like. I could be questioning one of them meantime.

LANDRIEU. No. You enjoy it too much. Aren't you hungry?

CLOCHET. No.

LANDRIEU [*to PELLERIN*]. Fancy. Clochet isn't hungry! [*To CLOCHET.*] Are you ill?

CLOCHET. I'm never hungry when I'm working. [*He goes to the radio and turns the switch.*]

PELLERIN. Stop that bloody noise.

CLOCHET [*muttering. One hears*] . . . don't like music.

PELLERIN. What's that?

CLOCHET. I said I'm always surprised when I find people don't like music.

PELLERIN. Maybe I do like music, but I don't like that kind, and I don't like it here.

CLOCHET. Really? I know the kind you like. . . . [*Regretfully.*]
We should have gone at him more gently. . . .

PELLERIN. Shut up!

CLOCHET. You're just animals. [*Pause.*] Can't we send for one of them?

LANDRIEU. For God's sake let us alone! We've got three of them to see, it'll take until ten o'clock. I get all nervous when I have to work on an empty stomach.

CLOCHET. But there're only two of them, since we decided to keep the kid for tomorrow. With a little organization we

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

could be through in a couple of hours. [*Pause.*] Radio Toulouse is broadcasting *Tosca* tonight.

LANDRIEU. Oh, shut up. Go down and see what they've found for supper.

CLOCHET. I know: chicken.

LANDRIEU. Again! I couldn't face it. Go down and get us some bully.

CLOCHET [*to PELLERIN*]. What about you?

PELLERIN. Bully.

LANDRIEU. And send someone to clean up this mess.

CLOCHET. What mess?

LANDRIEU. There, where the Greek bled on the floor. It's disgusting.

CLOCHET. You shouldn't clean up the blood. It might impress the others.

LANDRIEU. I shan't eat while that filth is on the floor. [*Pause.*]

What are you waiting for?

CLOCHET. You shouldn't clean up that blood.

LANDRIEU. Who gives the orders here?

CLOCHET *shrugs his shoulders and goes out.*

PELLERIN. Go easy with Clochet.

LANDRIEU. I'll do as I please.

PELLERIN. I'm just warning you. . . . He has a cousin on Darnand's staff. He sends in reports. I think he was the one who got Daubin sacked.

LANDRIEU. The filthy swine! If he wants to get rid of me, he'll have to get a move on. I've an idea Darnand might be liquidated before me.

PELLERIN. Quite possible. [*He sighs and goes mechanically to the radio.*]

LANDRIEU. Oh, no—not you too.

PELLERIN. Just for the news.

LANDRIEU [*sneering*]. I think I know what it is.

PELLERIN *turns the dials on the radio.*

LOUDSPEAKER. At the third stroke it will be eight o'clock. Pip.

Pip. Pip. [*They adjust their watches.*] Ladies and gentlemen, in a few seconds you will hear our usual Sunday concert. [*First bars of 'Lilli Marlene.'*]

LANDRIEU [*sighing*]. Sunday. Wring its neck.

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PELLERIN. Sundays, I used to take the car. I'd pick up a skirt in Montmartre, and run down to Le Touquet.

LANDRIEU. When was that?

PELLERIN. Oh! Before the war.

PELLERIN *has been twisting the dial of the radio. The 'V' sign is heard.*

LANDRIEU. Filthy saboteurs. . . . [*He picks up an empty tin and throws it at the radio.*]

PELLERIN. Are you mad? You'll break the damn thing.

LANDRIEU. To hell with it. I don't want to listen to the bloody spies.

PELLERIN *turns the dials again.*

LOUDSPEAKER. German troops are holding out at Cherbourg and at Caen. In the St.-Lo sector, they have not been able to prevent a slight advance by the enemy.

LANDRIEU. Are you deaf? Shut it off.

LOUDSPEAKER. However, this is a purely strategic withdrawal and the high command is doubtless aiming at creating a fluid front. [*PELLERIN turns it off.*]

LANDRIEU. What'll you do? Where'll you go?

PELLERIN. What do you expect? It's all over.

LANDRIEU. Yes. The swine.

PELLERIN. Who do you mean?

LANDRIEU. All of them. The Germans too. They're all alike. [*Pause.*] If we could start again. . . .

PELLERIN. I don't regret a thing. I've had a lot of fun, until quite recently.

CLOCHET *comes back, carrying the tins of food.*

LANDRIEU. I say, Clochet. The English have landed at Nice.

CLOCHET. Nice?

LANDRIEU. They met with no resistance. They're marching on Puget-Theuiers.

CLOCHET *slips on to a bench.*

CLOCHET. Holy Virgin! [*LANDRIEU and PELLERIN laugh.*] Is it a joke? You shouldn't joke about such things.

LANDRIEU. It's all right. You can put it in your report tonight. [*A MILITIAMAN enters.*] Clean up that filth. [*To PELLERIN.*] Ready to eat?

[*PELLERIN joins him, picks up his tin of bully, looks at it, then*

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

puts it down again. LANDRIEU *yawns.*] I always feel odd before we start. [*He yawns again.*] I'm not tough enough; I only get angry when they get stubborn. What's he like, the next one? CLOCHET. Tall, broad, about thirty. We should see some sport. LANDRIEU. Provided he doesn't play us the same dirty trick as the Greek.

PELLERIN. Bah! The Greek! An animal!

LANDRIEU. Doesn't matter. It hurts me when they won't talk. [*He yawns.*] You're making me yawn. [*Pause. LANDRIEU looks at the bottom of his tin without a word, then suddenly, to the MILITIAMAN*] Well? Go and fetch him.

The MILITIAMAN goes out. Silence. CLOCHET whistles. PELLERIN goes to the window and opens it wide.

CLOCHET. Don't open the window. It's getting cold.

PELLERIN. Window? Oh, yes. . . . [*He laughs.*] I opened it without thinking. [*He starts to shut it.*]

LANDRIEU. Leave it. There's a terrible stink in here.

CLOCHET. As you like.

HENRI *comes in with three Militiamen.*

LANDRIEU. Put him in that chair. Take off his handcuffs. Tie his wrists to the arms. [*The Militiamen tie him up.*] What's your name?

HENRI. Henri.

LANDRIEU. Henri what?

HENRI. Henri.

LANDRIEU *makes a sign. The Militiamen beat HENRI.*

LANDRIEU. Now. What's your name?

HENRI. My name is Henri, that's all.

They beat him again.

LANDRIEU. That's enough, you'll make him muzzy. Age?

HENRI. Twenty-nine.

LANDRIEU. Profession?

HENRI. Before the war, I was a medical student.

PELLERIN. An educated bastard, eh? [*To the Militiamen.*] Hit him.

LANDRIEU. Don't let's waste time.

PELLERIN. Medical student! I told you to hit him!

LANDRIEU. Pellerin! [*To HENRI.*] Where is your captain?

HENRI. I don't know.

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LANDRIEU. Naturally. No, don't hit him. Do you smoke? Wait. [*He puts a cigarette in his own mouth, lights it and holds it out. One of the Militiamen puts it into HENRI'S mouth.*] Smoke. What do you expect? You won't impress us. Come, Henri, don't be stupid. No one can see you. You're only wasting your time and mine. -You haven't many more hours to live.

HENRI. Neither have you.

LANDRIEU. Perhaps not. But you smoke. And think a little. You've got education, be a realist. If you don't talk, your girl friend or the boy will.

HENRI. That's their business.

LANDRIEU. Where is your captain?

HENRI. Make me tell you!

LANDRIEU. All right. Take away that cigarette. Clochet, fix him up.

CLOCHET. Put the sticks under the ropes. [*The Militiamen slip two sticks under the ropes that fasten HENRI'S wrists.*] Right. They'll be twisted until you talk.

HENRI. I shan't.

CLOCHET. Not immediately. You'll scream first.

HENRI. Try to make me scream.

CLOCHET. You're not humble, Henri. You must be very humble. Pride goes before a fall, you know. If you fall from too high, you might break your neck. Turn. Slowly? Well? Nothing? Good. Turn. Turn. Wait. He's beginning to feel it. Well? Of course, I understand. Pain means nothing to a man of your intelligence. Or does it? I think it does. [*Gently.*] You're sweating. I can feel for you. [*He wipes HENRI'S face with his handkerchief.*] Turn. He'll scream. He won't scream? You're moving. You can stop yourself screaming, but you can't help moving your head. How it hurts. [*He passes a finger over HENRI'S cheek.*] Your jaws are like iron; you must be in such agony. Are you afraid? What are you thinking? 'If I can only hold out for one moment, one little moment...' But after that moment, another will come, and another and another, until the pain is too much and you won't be able to think of anything. We shall never let you go. [*He takes HENRI'S head in his hands.*] Already, your eyes are beginning to fail. You can't see clearly any more. What do you see?

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

[*Gently.*] Handsome boy. Turn. [*Pause. Triumphantly.*] You're going to scream, Henri, you're going to scream. I can see the cry swelling in your throat; it's reached your lips. One little effort. Turn. [HENRI *cries out.*] Ha! [*Pause.*] How ashamed you must be. Turn. Don't stop. [HENRI *cries again.*] You see; it's only the first scream that matters. And now, quite gently, quite naturally, you're going to talk.

HENRI. You'll get nothing from me but screams.

CLOCHET. No, Henri, no. You've no right to be proud now. 'Try to make me scream!' Well, you see, it didn't take long. Where is your captain? Be humble, Henri, quite, quite humble. Tell us where he is. Well, what are you waiting for? Scream or speak. Turn. Turn again; good God, break his wrists. Stop! He's fainted. [*He fetches a little of spirits and a glass. He makes HENRI drink. Very gently.*] Drink, poor martyr. Feel better? Well, we can start again. Fetch the instruments.

LANDRIEU. No!

CLOCHET. What?

LANDRIEU [*passes his hand over his forehead*]. Take him out. You can work on him downstairs.

CLOCHET. We won't have much room.

LANDRIEU. I give the orders here, Clochet. That's the second time I've had to remind you.

CLOCHET. But . . .

LANDRIEU [*shouting*]. Do you want me to smash your face?

CLOCHET. Okay, okay. Bring him along. [*He goes out. The Militiamen untie HENRI and take him out.*]

PELLERIN. Are you coming?

LANDRIEU. No. Clochet makes me feel sick.

PELLERIN. He talks too much. [*Pause.*] Medical student! The bastard. I left school when I was thirteen—I had to earn my own living. I wasn't lucky. I had no rich parents to pay for my education.

LANDRIEU. I hope he talks.

PELLERIN. God in heaven, of course he'll talk.

HENRI *screams*. LANDRIEU *goes to the door and shuts it. Fresh screams that can be clearly heard through the door.* LANDRIEU *goes to the radio and turns it on.*

MEN WITHOUT SHADOWS

PELLERIN [*amazed*]. You're at it, too?

LANDRIEU. It's those screams. You need strong nerves.

PELLERIN. Let him scream. He's a bastard, a bloody intellectual.
[*Piercing music.*] Turn it down. I can't hear him.

LANDRIEU. Go and join them. [PELLERIN *hesitates, then goes out.*] He must talk. He's a coward. He must be a coward.

Music and screams. The screams stop. Pause. PELLERIN comes back, pale.

PELLERIN. Stop that music.

LANDRIEU [*turning it off*]. Well?

PELLERIN [*goes to the door*]. Stop. Bring him back in here.

[CLOCHET and the Militiamen return, bringing HENRI. Going to HENRI.] It isn't over. We'll pay you back, don't worry. Don't look at me. I told you not to look at me. [*He hits him.*] Bastard. [*The Militiamen untie HENRI.*]

CLOCHET. One moment. [*Going to HENRI.*] Hold out your wrists, I want to put the bracelets on again. [*He puts the handcuffs on, very gently.*] That hurts, doesn't it? That hurts like hell? Poor chap. [*He strokes his hair.*] You mustn't be so proud. You screamed, you know, you did scream. Tomorrow, you'll talk.

The Militiamen take HENRI away at a gesture from LANDRIEU.

PELLERIN. The bastard!

LANDRIEU. I don't like it.

CLOCHET. What?

LANDRIEU. I don't like it when they won't talk.

CLOCHET. He screamed, though. He did scream. . . . [*Shrugs his shoulders.*]

PELLERIN. Fetch the girl.

LANDRIEU. The girl . . . And if she doesn't talk?

PELLERIN. Well?

LANDRIEU. Nothing. [*With sudden violence.*] Surely one of them will talk!

CLOCHET. We ought to fetch the blonde back. He's just ready.

LANDRIEU. The blonde?

CLOCHET. Sorbier. He's a coward.

LANDRIEU. A coward? Get him.

CLOCHET *goes out.*

PELLERIN. They're all cowards. Only some of them are stubborn.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

LANDRIEU. Pellerin! What would you do if someone tore off your nails?

PELLERIN. The English don't tear off your nails.

LANDRIEU. What about the maquis?

PELLERIN. They won't tear off our nails.

LANDRIEU. Why not?

PELLERIN. Things like that couldn't happen to us.

CLOCHET *re-enters, preceding* SORBIER.

CLOCHET. Let me question him. Take off his handcuffs. Tie his arms to the chair. Good. [*He goes to SORBIER.*] Well, well, here you are again. Here you are again in this nice chair. And here we are. Do you know why we brought you back?

SORBIER. No.

CLOCHET. Because you're a coward and you're going to squeal. Aren't you a coward?

SORBIER. Yes.

CLOCHET. You see, of course you are. I read it in your eyes. Show me your eyes—your big staring eyes. . . .

SORBIER. Yours will be like mine when you're hanged.

CLOCHET. Don't get fresh, or you'll be sorry.

SORBIER. Like mine; we're brothers. I attract you, don't I? It's not me you're torturing. It's yourself.

CLOCHET [*abruptly*]. Are you a Jew?

SORBIER [*astonished*]. Me? No.

CLOCHET. I swear you are a Jew. [*He makes a sign to the Militiamen who strike SORBIER.*] Are you a Jew?

SORBIER. Yes. I am a Jew.

CLOCHET. Good. Now, listen. The nails first. That will give you time to think; we're in no hurry, we've got the whole night. Will you talk?

SORBIER. Bastard!

CLOCHET. What did you say?

SORBIER. I said: bastard. You and I, we're both bastards.

CLOCHET [*to the Militiamen*]. Take the pincers and begin.

SORBIER. Leave me alone! Leave me alone! I'll talk. I'll tell you everything you want to know.

CLOCHET [*to the Militiamen*]. Pull the nail a little all the same, to show him we're serious.

SORBIER *groans*.

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CLOCHET. Good. Where is your captain?

SORBIER. Let me go. I can't bear this chair any more! I can't bear it! I can't bear it!

LANDRIEU. That's enough: let him go.

The Militiamen set him free. He rises and staggers to the table.

SORBIER. Cigarette.

LANDRIEU. Afterwards.

SORBIER. What do you want to know? Where is our captain? I know. The others don't, but I do. I know everything. He is . . . [*Abruptly pointing behind them.*] . . . there! [*Everyone turns round. He springs to the window and jumps on to the window-sill.*] I've won! Don't come near me, or I'll jump. I've won! I've won!

CLOCHET. Don't play the fool. If you speak, we'll let you go.

SORBIER [*spits. Shouting*]. Hey, up there! Henri, Canoris, I didn't squeal.

The Militiamen rush towards him. He jumps into the void.

PELLERIN. The bastard! The cowardly bastard! Get hold of him. They lean out of the window.

LANDRIEU [*to the Militiamen*]. Go down after him. If he's still alive, bring him back. We'll go over him until he breaks between our hands.

The Militiamen go out. Pause.

CLOCHET. I told you to shut the window.

LANDRIEU *goes to him and hits him in the face.*

LANDRIEU. Put that in your report.

Pause. CLOCHET takes his handkerchief and wipes his mouth. A Militiaman comes back.

MILITIAMAN. Dead!

LANDRIEU [*after a pause*]. Get the girl. [*The Militiaman goes out.*] They'll squeal, by God! They'll squeal!

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

ACT TWO

The attic. FRANÇOIS, CANORIS and HENRI are sitting on the ground, huddled against each other. They are talking softly. JEAN is pacing up and down, unhappily. From time to time he makes as if to join in the conversation, but stops himself, and goes back to his restless pacing.

CANORIS. While they were tying my arms, I watched them. One bastard came and hit me. I looked at him, and I thought, I've seen you somewhere before. After that, some of them came and started to kick me, and I tried to remember.

HENRI. Which one was it?

CANORIS. The little bastard who talks so much. I used to see him in Grenoble. You know Chasières, the cake-shop in the main street? He used to sell cream cakes in the back-room. Every Sunday morning, this bastard used to come out of there, carrying a box of cakes tied up with pink string. I remembered him because of his ugly mug. I thought he was probably working for the police.

HENRI. You should have told me.

CANORIS. What, that he was working for the police?

HENRI. That Chasières sold cream cakes. Did he have his little jokes with you too?

CANORIS. I'll say he did. He bent down and breathed in my face.

JEAN [*abruptly*]. What did he say?

They all turn towards him and look at him in surprise.

HENRI. Nothing. Bloody nonsense.

JEAN. I couldn't have stood it.

HENRI. Why not? Gives you something to think about.

JEAN. Oh, really? Of course I wouldn't know.

Pause. HENRI *turns back to* CANORIS.

HENRI. What do you think they were in civvy street?

CANORIS. The fat one who takes notes all the time might be a dentist.

HENRI [*laughs*]. I say! Lucky for us he didn't bring his drill.
They laugh.

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JEAN [*violently*]. Stop laughing. [*They stop and look at JEAN.*]
I know, you can laugh. You have the right to laugh. And I
have no more orders to give you. [*Pause.*] If anyone had told
me that one day you would frighten me . . . [*Pause.*] How can
you laugh?

HENRI. It's possible.

JEAN. Of course. And you can bear your own sufferings. That
gives you a clear conscience. I was married once; I never
told you. In this kind of life, marriage is one of those things
one hides. My wife died in child-birth. It was a summer's
day, just like today. I walked up and down in the corridor
of the hospital, and I knew she was going to die. It's just the
same, just the same! I wanted to help her, and I couldn't. I
walked up and down, and I tried to hear her cries. She didn't
cry. It was much easier for her. For you too.

HENRI. It's not our fault.

JEAN. It wasn't hers either. I wish I could help you.

CANORIS. There's nothing you can do.

JEAN. I know. [*Pause.*] They took her away two hours ago. They
didn't keep any of you so long.

HENRI. She's a girl. They amuse themselves with girls.

JEAN [*exploding*]. I'll come back in a week, in a month. I'll
come back, and make them pay for this.

HENRI. You're lucky to be able to hate them still.

JEAN. Am I? It gives me something to think about.

*He paces up and down a moment longer, then has an idea and
drags an old stove under the window.*

CANORIS. What are you doing now? You make me tired.

JEAN. I want to see him again before it gets dark.

HENRI. See who?

JEAN. Sorbier.

HENRI [*indifferently*]. Oh!

JEAN *climbs on the stove and looks out of the window.*

JEAN. He's still lying there. They'll leave him until he rots. Do
you want to see? I'll help you.

CANORIS. What for?

JEAN. Yes. What for? You can leave the dead to me.

FRANÇOIS. I want to see.

HENRI. I wouldn't advise you to.

ACT TWO

FRANÇOIS [*to JEAN*]. Help me. [*JEAN helps him to climb on the stove. He looks out of the window.*] He . . . his head's all battered in.

He climbs down, and crouches in a corner, trembling.

HENRI [*to JEAN*]. That was clever.

JEAN. Well, why not? I thought you were all so tough you could stand the sight of a corpse.

HENRI. Me perhaps, but not that kid. [*To FRANÇOIS.*] Leave the funeral service to Jean, it's his business. You don't have to worry about Sorbier. He's finished, forget it. You've still got a lot of ground to cover. Worry about yourself.

FRANÇOIS. My head will be crushed like that . . . my eyes . . .

HENRI. That's got nothing to do with you. You won't be there to see.

Pause. JEAN paces up and down, then comes back and stands in front of CANORIS and HENRI.

JEAN. Henri, must I have my nails torn off before I can become one of you?

CANORIS. You have always been one of us.

JEAN. You know I haven't. [*Pause.*] Who told you I wouldn't have held out? [*To HENRI.*] Maybe I wouldn't have screamed either?

HENRI. So what?

JEAN. I'm sorry. I've no right to say anything.

HENRI. Jean! Come and sit here with us. [*JEAN hesitates, then sits down.*] You would be like us if you were in our place. And besides, we haven't the same responsibilities. [*JEAN gets up abruptly.*] What's up?

JEAN. Until they bring her back, I can't keep still.

HENRI. You're only making things worse for yourself.

JEAN. For six months I didn't tell her I loved her, and at night, when I took her in my arms, I put out the light. Now she is in the midst of them, and they are pawing her with their filthy hands.

HENRI. What does it matter? The important thing is to win.

JEAN. Win what?

HENRI. Win. There are two teams, one trying to make the other talk. [*He laughs.*] It's a bit idiotic. But it's all we've got. If we talk, we've lost everything. They've marked up a few

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points because I screamed, but on the whole, we aren't so badly off.

JEAN. Win or lose, I don't give a damn! Those are just words. But she is suffering real shame, real agony.

HENRI. So what? I was ashamed myself, when they forced me to scream. But it doesn't last. And if she keeps quiet, their hands can't leave any marks. They are miserable bastards, you know.

JEAN. They are men.

HENRI. If you want to know, I love her too.

JEAN. You?

HENRI. Why not? And I didn't think it so funny when you went up the ladder, the pair of you. I often wondered if you put out the light.

JEAN. You love her? And you can sit there like that?

HENRI. Her suffering is bringing us together. The pleasure you gave her kept us apart. Today I am nearer to her than you are.

JEAN. That's not true! She's thinking of me, only of me. It's to protect me that she is enduring the suffering and the shame.

HENRI. No. It's to win.

JEAN. Liar! [*Pause.*] She said herself: when I come back, there will be nothing in my eyes but love for you.

Footsteps in the corridor.

HENRI. Here she comes. See for yourself.

The door opens. HENRI rises.

JEAN. Oh, God! I can never look at her again.

LUCIE enters. JEAN and HENRI look at her in silence. She comes in quite steadily, without looking at them, and sits down-stage. *Pause.*

LUCIE. François. [FRANÇOIS comes to her and sits down at her knee.] Don't touch me. Give me Sorbier's coat. [FRANÇOIS picks up the jacket.] Put it round my shoulders. [She clutches it to her tightly.]

FRANÇOIS. Are you cold?

LUCIE. No. [*Pause.*] What are they all doing? Why are they looking at me? Why don't they say something?

JEAN [*coming up behind her*]. Lucie!

ACT TWO

CANORIS. Leave her alone.

JEAN. Lucie!

LUCIE [*gently*]. What do you want?

JEAN. You promised me there would be nothing in your eyes but love.

LUCIE. Love? [*She shrugs her shoulders sadly.*]

CANORIS [*who has risen*]. Leave her alone! You can talk to her later on.

JEAN [*violently*]. Leave her alone! She's mine. You have deserted me, you others, and I say nothing. But you won't take her from me. [*To LUCIE.*] Speak to me, Lucie. You aren't like the others? You can't be! Why don't you answer? Are you angry with me?

LUCIE. I'm not angry with you.

JEAN. My sweet Lucie.

LUCIE. I shall never be your sweet Lucie again, Jean.

JEAN. Don't you love me?

LUCIE. I don't know. [*He takes a step towards her.*] Please—don't touch me. [*With an effort.*] I think I ought to love you. But I can't feel my love any more. [*Very tired.*] I can't feel anything.

CANORIS [*to JEAN*]. Come away. [*He drags him away and makes JEAN sit down beside him.*]

LUCIE [*as if to herself*]. None of this matters very much. [*To FRANÇOIS.*] What are they doing?

FRANÇOIS. They're sitting with their back to you.

LUCIE. I see. [*Pause.*] Tell them I didn't talk!

CANORIS. We know, Lucie.

LUCIE. Good.

Long pause, then sound of steps in the corridor. FRANÇOIS starts upright and cries out.

LUCIE. What's the matter? Oh yes, it's your turn. You must be very brave; you must make them feel ashamed!

The steps come nearer, then fade away again.

FRANÇOIS [*collapses against LUCIE*]. I can't bear it! I can't bear it!

LUCIE. Look at me. [*She lifts his head.*] How frightened you are! You won't talk, will you? Answer me!

FRANÇOIS. I don't know any more. I had a little bit of courage

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left, but I shouldn't have seen you. Look at you, with your hair in a mess, and your blouse torn! I know they took you in their arms.

LUCIE [*violently*]. They didn't touch me. No one touched me. I was made of stone, and I didn't even feel their hands. I looked at them, and I thought, nothing is going to happen. [*Passionately.*] And nothing did happen. They were frightened of me. [*Pause.*] François, if you talk, they will have really raped me. They will say: 'We got them at last!' They will smile when they remember. They will say: 'We had lots of fun with the boy.' You must make them feel ashamed; if I didn't think I'd see them again, and make them feel ashamed again, I'd hang myself now from the bars of the window. Will you keep silent?

FRANÇOIS *shrugs his shoulders without replying. Silence.*

HENRI [*softly*]. Well, Jean, who was right? She wants to win; that's all.

JEAN. Shut up! Why are you trying to take her from me? You have everything; you will die proudly and joyfully. I have nothing left but her, and I have got to live.

HENRI. I want nothing, and I haven't taken her.

JEAN. Go on! Go on! You have all the rights, even the right to torture me; you have paid in advance. [*He gets up.*] How sure you all are of yourselves. A little bodily pain and your conscience is clear. [*HENRI doesn't reply.*] Don't you see that I am suffering more than any of you?

FRANÇOIS [*who has straightened up abruptly*]. Ha! Ha! Ha!

JEAN [*crying*]. More than any of you! Any of you!

FRANÇOIS [*springing at him*]. Look at him! Just look at him! He's suffering more than any of us! He can sleep and eat. His hands are free, he will see the sun again, he will live. But he's suffering more than we are. What do you want us to do? Feel sorry for you? Swine!

JEAN [*who has folded his arms*]. Quite right.

FRANÇOIS. I jump every time I hear a noise. I can't swallow. I feel I'm dying. But he's suffering more than any of us. Of course he is! I am going to die happy. [*Exploding.*] I'll make you happy, see if I don't!

LUCIE [*who has risen abruptly*]. François!

ACT TWO

FRANÇOIS. I'll denounce you! I'll denounce you! I'll help you to share our happiness.

JEAN [*softly and quickly*]. Go ahead. You don't know how much I want you to go ahead.

LUCIE [*taking FRANÇOIS by the scruff of the neck, and twisting his head round to face her.*] Look at me! Will you dare to betray him?

FRANÇOIS. Dare! That's a fine word! I'll denounce him, that's all. It will be so easy; they'll come up to me, my lips will open of their own accord, the name will come out, and I will be glad. What's so difficult about that? When I look at you, pale and haggard, like a bunch of maniacs, I'm not frightened of your scorn any more. [*Pause.*] I'm going to save you, Lucie. They will let us live.

LUCIE. I don't want that kind of life.

FRANÇOIS. I do. I don't care what kind of life it is.

CANORIS. They won't let you live, François. Even if you do speak.

FRANÇOIS [*meaning JEAN*]. At least I'll see him suffer.

HENRI [*rising and going to LUCIE*]. Think he'll speak?

LUCIE [*turning to FRANÇOIS and looking at him*]. Yes.

HENRI. Sure? [*They look at each other.*]

LUCIE [*after a long hesitation*]. Yes.

HENRI goes to FRANÇOIS. CANORIS rises and comes to stand beside HENRI. Both of them look at FRANÇOIS.

HENRI. François, I'm not your judge. You're only a kid still, and all this was too tough for you. I expect at your age, I'd have done the same.

CANORIS. It's our fault. We shouldn't have brought you with us. Some risks should only be taken by men. Forgive us.

FRANÇOIS [*retreating*]. What do you mean? What are you going to do to me?

HENRI. We can't allow you to speak, François. They'll kill you all the same, you know. And you will die in despair.

FRANÇOIS [*frightened*]. All right, I won't speak. I tell you, I won't speak. Leave me alone.

HENRI. We can't trust you. They know you are our weak point. They'll work on you until you squeal. And we can't let that happen.

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JEAN. Do you really think I'm going to let you do this? Don't be afraid, François. My hands are free, and I am with you.

LUCIE [*standing in his way*]. Why are you interfering?

JEAN. He is your brother.

LUCIE [*shrugs*]. He will die tomorrow.

JEAN. Is this really you?

LUCIE. He must be silenced. The method doesn't matter.

FRANÇOIS. You aren't going to . . . [*They do not answer.*] I swear to you I won't say anything. [*They do not answer.*]

Lucie, help, help. Stop them from hurting me! I won't talk! I swear to you, I won't talk!

JEAN [*standing beside FRANÇOIS*]. You shan't touch him.

HENRI. Do you want the militiamen to make mincemeat of our boys when they march into the village? Take care, Jean; if you prevent us from handling this affair, you'll be responsible for their deaths.

JEAN. Let him take his chance; maybe he won't talk.

CANORIS. We have no right to give him a chance.

They look at each other for a long moment, then JEAN moves away.

FRANÇOIS [*looks at him, then begins to shout*]. Lucie! Help! I don't want to die here, not in this darkness. Henri, I am only sixteen, let me live. Don't kill me in the dark.

HENRI *grips him by the throat*.

FRANÇOIS. Lucie!

LUCIE *turns away her head*.

LUCIE. My darling, my poor darling, my only love, forgive me. [*She turns away. Pause.*] Do it quickly.

HENRI. I can't; my wrists are half-broken.

Pause.

LUCIE. Is it over?

HENRI. He is dead.

LUCIE *turns round, and takes the body of FRANÇOIS in her arms. His head rests on her knees. A very long silence; then JEAN begins to speak softly. All the following dialogue is spoken in an undertone.*

JEAN. What has become of you all? Why didn't you die with the others? You horrify me.

HENRI. Do you think I like myself?

ACT TWO

JEAN. It doesn't matter. In twenty-four hours you'll be rid of yourself. But for the rest of my days I shall see that child begging for mercy, and the look on your face as you strangled him. [*He goes up to FRANÇOIS and looks down at him.*] Sixteen! He died in anger and in fear. [*He goes back to HENRI.*] He loved you; he used to sleep with his head on your shoulder; he used to say, 'I sleep better when you are with me.' [*Pause.*] Damn you!

HENRI [*to CANORIS and LUCIE*]. Why don't you say something? Don't leave me alone. Lucie! Canoris! You killed him with my hands. [*No answer. He turns to JEAN.*] And what about you? You curse me, but what did you do to defend him?

JEAN [*violently*]. What could I do? What would you have let me do?

HENRI. Your hands were free, you should have hit me. [*Passionately.*] If you had hit me . . . if you had knocked me down . . .

JEAN. My hands were free? You had cut my throat. If I say a word, if I make a movement: 'What about the others?' You had shut me out. You had decided I must live, and he must die. Coldly. Don't tell me now that I am your accomplice; that's too easy. I am your witness, that is all. And I say you are murderers. [*Pause.*] You killed him out of vanity.

HENRI. It's not true! Lucie, tell him it isn't true! [*LUCIE doesn't answer. He takes a step towards her.*] Answer me! Do you think I killed him out of vanity?

LUCIE. I don't know. [*A pause, then painfully.*] We had to be sure he wouldn't talk.

HENRI. He was your brother. You are the only one who has the right to judge me. Do you hate me for it?

LUCIE. I don't hate you. [*He takes a step towards the body she still holds in her arms. Tensely.*] Don't touch him.

HENRI turns slowly, and goes back to CANORIS.

HENRI. Don't desert me. You have no right to desert me. When my hands were round his neck, I felt as though they were our hands, and that we were all choking him, otherwise I would never have been able . . .

CANORIS. He had to die; if he had been beside me, I would have strangled him. As for what goes on inside your head . . .

MEN WITHOUT SHADOWS

HENRI. Well?

CANORIS. That doesn't matter. Nothing matters between these four walls. He had to die; that's all.

HENRI. All right. [*He goes up to the body. To LUCIE.*] Don't worry, I won't touch him. [*He bends over FRANÇOIS and looks at him for a long time, then he straightens up.*] Jean, when we threw our first grenade, how many hostages were shot? [*JEAN does not reply.*] Twelve. There was a boy amongst them; he was called Destrechez. Remember? We saw the placards in the rue des Minimes. Charbonnel wanted to give himself up, and you prevented him.

JEAN. Well?

HENRI. Do you ever wonder why you stopped him?

JEAN. It's not the same thing.

HENRI. Perhaps. So much the better for you if your motives were clearer. You have kept a clean conscience. But Destrechez died all the same. I shall never have a clear conscience again, until they stick me up against a wall with a bandage over my eyes. But why do I want a clear conscience? The kid had to die.

JEAN. I wouldn't like to be in your place.

HENRI [*gently*]. This doesn't concern you, Jean, you cannot understand, or judge us.

A long silence, then LUCIE's voice. She strokes FRANÇOIS's hair without looking at him. For the first time since the beginning of the scene she speaks aloud.

LUCIE. You are dead, my darling, and my eyes are dry; forgive me. I have no more tears, and death doesn't matter any more. Outside three hundred bodies are lying on the grass, and tomorrow I shall be cold and naked too, with no one to smooth my hair. There's nothing to regret, you know; life has no real importance any more. Good-bye, my darling brother, you did what you could. If you fell short, it was only because you weren't strong enough. No one has the right to blame you.

JEAN [*a long silence. He comes to sit beside LUCIE*]. Lucie! [*She makes a movement.*] Don't drive me away. I want to help you.

LUCIE [*astonished*]. Help me? I don't need help.

JEAN. Yes, you do. I think I'm afraid you'll break down.

ACT TWO

LUCIE. I'll be all right until tomorrow evening.

JEAN. You've been through too much, you won't be able to hold out. Your courage will snap all of a sudden.

LUCIE. Why do you worry about me? [*She looks at him.*] You are very unhappy. All right, I'll reassure you, and then you can go. Everything has become very clear since the boy died; I've only myself to think about. And I don't need courage to die. In any case, I wouldn't have been able to survive him for long. Go away now. I shall say good-bye to you later when they come for me.

JEAN. Let me stay here with you. I won't talk, if you don't want me to, but I'll be there, and you won't feel so alone.

LUCIE. Not alone? With you? Oh, Jean, you haven't understood. We have nothing more in common.

JEAN. Have you forgotten I love you?

LUCIE. You loved someone else.

JEAN. It's you I love.

LUCIE. I've become another person. I don't know myself. Something has got blocked in my head.

JEAN. Maybe. Maybe you have become another person. All right, it's this new person I love, and tomorrow, when you die, it will be a dead Lucie that I love. It's you I love, Lucie, *you*, it's always you.

LUCIE. All right. You love me. And then?

JEAN. You used to love me.

LUCIE. Yes. And I loved my brother, and allowed Henri to kill him. Our love is so far away, why talk to me about it? It really doesn't matter at all.

JEAN. That's not true! You know it's not true! It was our life, our whole life. Everything we have lived through, we have lived through together.

LUCIE. Our life, yes. Our future. I lived in an eternal expectation. I loved you in expectation. I was waiting for the end of the war. Waiting for the day when we could be married in the eyes of the world. Each night I waited for you. Now I have no future. I expect nothing but my death, and I shall die alone. [*Pause.*] Leave me alone. We have nothing to say to each other. I am not in pain and I have no need of consolation.

MEN WITHOUT SHADOWS

JEAN. Do you think I'd try to console you? I can see your dry eyes, and I know that your heart is a hell. Not a trace of suffering, not even the moisture of a tear, everything burnt to ashes. Lucie, I wish I could help you to pity yourself a little. If you could only relax, put your head on my shoulder . . . Speak to me, look at me.

LUCIE. Don't touch me.

JEAN. Lucie, whatever you do, we are still together. The harm they did you, they did to me, and if you come into my arms, it will become our suffering. If you could only shed one tear . . .

LUCIE [*violently*]. A tear? All I want is for them to come for me again, and beat me, so that I can keep silent again, and fool them and frighten them.

JEAN [*overcome*]. Then it's nothing but pride.

LUCIE. Is it my fault? It was my pride they attacked. I hate them, but they still hold me; and I hold them. I feel nearer to them than I do to you. [*She laughs.*] Are your wrists crushed like Henri? Are your legs cut like Canoris? It's only a game for you; you have felt nothing, you only imagine things.

JEAN . . . Ah! If that's all you need to make me one of you . . .
[*He looks around him, sees a heavy log, and picks it up.*]

LUCIE. What are you doing?

JEAN [*laying his left hand on the floor, he strikes it with the log*]. I've had enough of your boastings. What they did to you, I can do to myself; anyone can do it.

LUCIE *bursts out laughing*.

LUCIE [*laughing*]. No good, no good. You can break your bones, you can tear out your eyes. It's you, you who has chosen to inflict the pain. Each of our wounds is a violation because they were inflicted by other people. You can't catch up with us.

A pause. JEAN *throws down the log and looks at her. Then he gets up.*

JEAN. You are right. You are together and I am alone. I won't speak to you, I'll hide in the shadows and you can forget my existence. I suppose it's my part in this story and I must accept it as you have accepted your own. [*Pause.*] Just now I

ACT TWO

had an idea. Pierre was killed outside the grotto at Servaz where we used to hide the guns. If they let me go, I'll go back there; I'll put some papers in his pockets and drag his body into the grotto. Allow four hours after I've gone, and when they start questioning you again, tell them about the hiding-place. They'll find Pierre and they'll think it's me. So then they'll have nothing to torture you for, and they'll finish with you. That's all. Good-bye.

He withdraws into the shadows. Long silence. Then footsteps in the corridor. A Militiaman appears carrying a lantern. He throws the light all round the room.

MILITIAMAN [*seeing FRANÇOIS*]. What's the matter with him?

LUCIE. He's asleep.

MILITIAMAN [*to JEAN*]. Here, you. They want you.

JEAN *hesitates, looks at each of them in turn with a sort of despair, and follows the Militiaman. The door closes again.*

LUCIE. He'll be all right, won't he?

CANORIS. I think so.

LUCIE. Good. That's one worry less. He'll go back to his friends, and everything will be for the best. Come here to me. [*HENRI and CANORIS go to her.*] Nearer. Henri, what's stopping you? We're all friends here. Come, come. [*She looks at them and understands.*] Ah! [*Pause.*] It's the ones downstairs who killed him with our hands. I am his sister, and I tell you you are not guilty of his death. Lay your hands on him. Since he died he has become one of us again. See how stern he looks; he has closed his lips on a secret. Touch him.

HENRI [*stroking FRANÇOIS's hair*]. Poor boy! Poor little boy!

LUCIE. They made you cry out, Henri, I heard you. You must feel very ashamed.

HENRI. Yes.

LUCIE. I feel your shame with the warmth of your body. It is my shame too. I told him I was alone, and I lied to him. With you two, I don't feel alone. [*To CANORIS.*] You didn't cry out, did you; it's a pity.

CANORIS. I am ashamed too.

LUCIE. Why?

CANORIS. When Henri cried out, I was ashamed for him.

MEN WITHOUT SHADOWS

LUCIE. I see. Come close to me. I feel your arms and your shoulders; my brother's weight is heavy on my knees. Tomorrow I must be brave again. Oh, how brave I shall be. For him, for myself, for Sorbier, for you two. We are all one.

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

Before the curtain rises, a deafening and vulgar voice is heard singing: 'If every cuckold wore a bell.' The curtain rises on the school-room. It is the following morning. PELLERIN is sitting on a bench, drinking. He looks exhausted. LANDRIEU is at the desk drinking; he is half-drunk. CLOCHET is standing near the window. He yawns from time to time. LANDRIEU bursts out laughing.

PELLERIN. What's the matter?

LANDRIEU [*putting his hand to his ear*]. What?

PELLERIN. What's the joke?

LANDRIEU [*pointing to the radio*]. That.

PELLERIN. Eh?

LANDRIEU. I think that's a bloody funny idea.

PELLERIN. What is?

LANDRIEU. To hang bells on cuckolds.

PELLERIN. Oh, hell! I can't hear what you're saying. [*He goes to the radio.*]

LANDRIEU [*shouting*]. Don't turn it off. [*PELLERIN turns the knob. Silence.*] You see!

PELLERIN [*taken aback*]. See what?

LANDRIEU. It's cold.

PELLERIN. You're cold? In July?

LANDRIEU. I tell you it's cold: you don't understand anything.

ACT THREE

PELLERIN. What were you saying just now?

LANDRIEU. When?

PELLERIN. About cuckolds.

LANDRIEU. Who the hell's talking about cuckolds? Cuckold yourself. *[Pause.]* I'm going to get the news. *[He rises and goes to the radio.]*

CLOCHET. There isn't any.

LANDRIEU. No news?

CLOCHET. It's not time.

LANDRIEU. Let's see. *[He turns the knob. Music, static.]*

PELLERIN. You're deafening us.

LANDRIEU *[speaking to the radio]*. Bastard. *[Pause.]* What the hell, I'm going to get the B.B.C. What's the wave-length?

PELLERIN. Twenty-one metres.

LANDRIEU *turns the dial. A speech in Czech. LANDRIEU begins to laugh.*

LANDRIEU *[laughing]*. It's Czech. D'you get it? There's a Czech talking from London. What a small world. *[He shakes the radio.]* Talk French, can't you? *[He turns it off.]* Give us a drink. *[PELLERIN pours out a glass of wine. LANDRIEU goes to him and drinks.]* What the hell are we doing here?

PELLERIN. Here or anywhere . . .

LANDRIEU. I'd much rather be with the fighting.

PELLERIN. Hum!

LANDRIEU. That's right—I wish I were. *[He seizes him by the sleeve of his coat.]* Don't you tell me I'm afraid to die.

PELLERIN. I didn't say a word.

LANDRIEU. What's death, anyway? What's it all about? . . . All got to die, tomorrow, day after tomorrow, three months time. . . .

CLOCHET *[quickly]*. It's not true! It's not true! We'll push the English back into the sea.

LANDRIEU. Into the sea! You'll feel them in your backside, make no mistake about that. Here in this village. Then there'll be fireworks. Bang-bang. Bang! on the church! Bang! on the town hall! What'll you do, Clochet? You'll be in the cellar. Ha! Ha! in the cellar! Won't we have fun! *[To PELLERIN.]* Once we're dead . . . I'd forgotten what I was thinking about. Listen, those clever little chaps, upstairs,

we'll knock them off, and I don't give a damn. Turn and turn about, that's what I say to myself. Today it's their turn, tomorrow it'll be mine. That's fair enough, isn't it? I'm always fair, aren't I? [*He drinks.*] We aren't animals. [*To CLOCHET.*] Why are you yawning?

CLOCHET. I'm bored.

LANDRIEU. All you've got to do is drink. Am I bored? You like spying on us, don't you? You're thinking what you'll put in your report. [*He pours out a glass of wine and holds it out to CLOCHET.*] Drink, damn you, drink!

CLOCHET. I can't. It's bad for my liver.

LANDRIEU. You'll drink this, or you'll get it in your face. [*Pause. CLOCHET puts out his hand, takes the glass and drinks.*] Ha! Ha! Animals, all animals, and everything's fine. [*Steps can be heard, someone is walking up and down in the attic. All three look up. They listen in silence, then abruptly LANDRIEU turns away, runs to the door and calls.*] Corbier! Corbier! [*A Militiaman appears.*] Go and make them shut up. Hit them. [*The Militiaman goes out. LANDRIEU shuts the door again and goes back to the others. All three are still looking up, listening. Pause.*] I suppose we've got to see them again. What a filthy day.

PELLERIN. Will you need me when you question them?

LANDRIEU. Why?

PELLERIN. I've been thinking. Their leader is probably hiding in the forest. I could take twenty men and organize a beat.

LANDRIEU [*looking at him*]. Ah? [*Pause. Footsteps still sound from upstairs.*] You'll stay here.

PELLERIN. Okay. [*Shrugging his shoulders*]. We're wasting time.

LANDRIEU. Maybe, but we'll waste it together. [*They look at the ceiling despite themselves, and speak the following lines in the same way, until the noise stops.*]

CLOCHET. It's time to bring the kid down.

LANDRIEU. I don't give a damn for the kid. I want to make the other bastard talk.

PELLERIN. They won't talk.

LANDRIEU. I tell you they will. They're just animals. You've got to know how to handle them. We didn't go at them hard enough. [*Scuffle in the attic, then silence. Satisfied.*] What

ACT THREE

did I tell you? They're quiet now. Just got to take a firm hand. [*They are visibly relieved.*]

CLOCHET. All the same, you ought to begin with the kid.

LANDRIEU. Okay. [*He goes to the door.*] Corbier. [*No answer.*]

Corbier! [*Hurried footsteps in the corridor. CORBIER appears.*]

Go and fetch the kid.

CORBIER. The kid? They've knocked him off.

LANDRIEU. What?

CORBIER. They knocked him off during the night. I found him with his head on his sister's lap. She said he was asleep; he's cold already, with finger-marks on his throat.

LANDRIEU. Ah? [*Pause.*] Who was walking about?

CORBIER. The Greek.

LANDRIEU. Good. You can go. [*CORBIER goes. Pause. In spite of himself, CLOCHET looks at the ceiling.*]

PELLERIN. Let's get this over. A firing-squad, straight away. Never see them again.

LANDRIEU. Shut up. [*He goes to the radio and turns the knob. A slow waltz. Then he goes back to the desk, and pours out a drink. As he puts his glass down, he sees the portrait of Pétain.*] You see this, you see this, but you wash your hands of it. . . . You sacrifice yourself, you dedicate yourself to France, and you don't give a damn for the details. You belong to history, and we can wallow in the slime. Bastard! [*He hurls his glass at his face.*]

CLOCHET. Landrieu!

LANDRIEU. Put that in your report. [*Pause. He controls himself with an effort, and goes back to PELLERIN.*] A firing-squad . . . that's too easy. That's what they want, don't you see?

PELLERIN. All right—it's what they want. But let's get this over, and never see them again.

LANDRIEU. I don't want them to die without talking.

PELLERIN. They can't tell us anything. They've been up there for twenty-four hours—their leader has had plenty of time to make his get-away.

LANDRIEU. I don't give a damn for their leader. I want them to squeal.

PELLERIN. And if they don't?

LANDRIEU. You don't have to worry.

MEN WITHOUT SHADOWS

PELLERIN. But supposing they don't talk?

LANDRIEU. I told you to shut up. [*Pause.*]

PELLERIN. Well, why not send for them?

LANDRIEU. Of course I'm going to send for them. [*He doesn't move. CLOCHET begins to laugh.*]

CLOCHET. Supposing they're bloody martyrs, eh?

LANDRIEU *goes abruptly to the door.*

LANDRIEU. Bring them down.

CORBIER [*appearing*]. All three?

LANDRIEU. Yes. All three. [*CORBIER goes out.*]

PELLERIN. You should have left the girl up there.

Sound of footsteps overhead.

LANDRIEU. They're coming down. [*He goes to the radio and stops it.*] If they'll give their leader away, I'll let them live.

CLOCHET. Landrieu! Are you mad?

LANDRIEU. Shut up.

CLOCHET. They deserve to die ten times over.

LANDRIEU. I don't give a damn for what they deserve. I want them to crack. They can't play the martyr with me.

PELLERIN. I . . . Listen, I couldn't bear it. If I had to think they were going to live, that they'd even live longer than we and for the rest of their lives they'd remember us . . .

LANDRIEU. You don't have to worry. If they squeal to save their skins, they won't care to remember us very often. Here they are.

PELLERIN *rises abruptly, and pushes the bottles and glasses under a chair. They wait, standing motionless.*

LUCIE, HENRI, CANORIS *and the three Militiamen come in. They look at each other in silence.*

LANDRIEU. What have you done to the boy?

No answer.

PELLERIN. Murderers!

LANDRIEU. Shut up. [*To the others.*] He wanted to talk, eh? And you wanted to stop him.

LUCIE [*violently*]. It's a lie. He didn't want to talk. None of us wants to talk.

LANDRIEU. So?

HENRI. He was too young. There was no point in letting him suffer.

ACT THREE

LANDRIEU. Which of you strangled him?

CANORIS. We decided together, and we are all responsible.

LANDRIEU. I see. [*Pause.*] If you give the information we require, your lives will be spared.

CLOCHET. Landrieu!

LANDRIEU. I told you to shut up. [*To the others.*] Do you accept? [*Pause.*] Well? Yes or no? [*They keep silent. LANDRIEU is embarrassed.*] You refuse? You would sacrifice three lives to save one? You're mad! [*Pause.*] It's life I am offering you! Life! Life! Are you all deaf?

Pause, then LUCIE takes a step towards them.

LUCIE. We've won! We've won! This moment makes everything worthwhile. Everything that happened last night, everything I was trying to forget, I'm proud to remember. I can say it now, I can shout it now. You raped me and you are ashamed. I am clean again. Where are your pincers and your thumbscrews? Where are your whips? This morning you beg us to live. The answer is no. No! You must finish what you've begun.

PELLERIN. Enough! Enough! Hit them!

LANDRIEU. Stop! Pellerin, I may not be your commanding officer much longer, but while I am here, no one else gives orders.

CLOCHET. Can't we just work on them a little? That was only words. Words. Wind. [*Pointing to HENRI.*] That bastard came to us swelling like a turkey-cock, and we made him scream like a woman.

HENRI. See if you can make me scream today.

LANDRIEU. Work them if you want to.

CLOCHET. Oh, you know, even if they are martyrs, I don't care. I enjoy the work for its own sake. [*To the Militiamen.*] Take them down to the tables.

CANORIS. One moment. If we agree, what proof have we that you'll let us live?

LANDRIEU. You have my word.

CANORIS. I see. I suppose that should be enough. It's heads or tails, anyway. What will you do with us?

LANDRIEU. Surrender you to the German authorities.

CANORIS. Who'll shoot us at sight.

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LANDRIEU. No. I'll explain your case to them.

CANORIS. Good. [*Pause.*] I'm ready to speak if my friends allow me.

HENRI. Canoris!

CANORIS. May I be alone with them? I think I can persuade them.

LANDRIEU [*surveying him*]. Why do you want to talk? Are you afraid to die?

A long pause, then CANORIS drops his head.

CANORIS. Yes.

LUCIE. Coward!

LANDRIEU. Good. [*To the Militiamen.*] Stand below the window. Guard the door. Come on. You've got fifteen minutes in which to convince them.

LANDRIEU, PELLERIN and CLOCHET go out.

During the first part of the scene LUCIE is silent, and appears not to be listening to the discussion.

CANORIS. Are you mad? You're looking at me as if I really meant it. All I'm going to do is send them to the grotto at Servaz, as Jean told us to. [*Pause. He smiles.*] They have chipped us a little, but we're still quite usable. [*Pause.*] Come now; we must talk; why throw away three lives? [*Pause. Gently.*] Why do you want to die? What good will it do? Answer me! What good will it do?

HENRI. None.

CANORIS. Well?

HENRI. I'm tired.

CANORIS. I'm more tired than you are. I'm fifteen years older, and they treated me much more roughly. The life they are giving me isn't particularly enjoyable.

HENRI [*gently*]. Are you so afraid of death?

CANORIS. Of course not. But we have no right to die for nothing.

HENRI. Why not? Why not? They broke my wrist, they cut my flesh; haven't I done enough? Look: Jean is out of danger, and in their eyes we have caught a look of shame. We have won all along the line; now it's all over, there's nothing to do but pull the trigger. Why do you want me to start life over again when I can die at peace with myself?

ACT THREE

CANORIS. We've got friends to help.

HENRI. What friends? Where?

CANORIS. Everywhere.

HENRI. What are you talking about? If they do spare our lives, they'll send us to the salt mines.

CANORIS. All right. Then we'll escape.

HENRI. You! Escape? You're only a rag.

CANORIS. If I don't, you will.

HENRI. A hundred to one chance.

CANORIS. But worth taking. And even if we don't escape, there are other people in the mines: old men who are sick, women who can't stand the work. They need us.

HENRI. Listen, when I saw him lying there, white and lifeless, I thought: it's done. I've done what I've done, and I regret nothing. Only, I was assuming that I should die at dawn. If I thought that six hours later we'd still be on this filthy earth . . . [*Shouting.*] I don't want to live without him. I don't want to live another thirty years without that boy. Canoris, it will be so easy; we shan't even have time to see the muzzles of their guns.

CANORIS. Why do you want to die for nothing?

HENRI. Do you still feel alive while men beat you until they break your bones? [*He looks out of the window.*] It's very dark—it's going to rain.

CANORIS. The sky is clouded over. We're in for a storm.

HENRI [*suddenly*]. It was vanity.

CANORIS. What?

HENRI. The boy. I did kill him out of vanity.

CANORIS. What does it matter? He had to die.

HENRI. I shall always have this horrible uncertainty—all my life I'll be questioning myself. I can't go on living.

CANORIS. Listen, Henri. If you die today, you've made your choice. You killed him out of vanity. But if you live . . .

HENRI. Well?

CANORIS. Then nothing is settled. Each one of your actions will be judged in the light of your whole life. If you let yourself be killed now when you could still go on living, then nothing could be more stupid than your death. [*Pause.*]

HENRI [*to LUCIE*]. Let her decide.

MEN WITHOUT SHADOWS

CANORIS. Do you hear, Lucie?

LUCIE. Decide what? What does my consent matter? It's your lives you're saving, not mine. I have decided to die.

CANORIS. What about our friends, Lucie?

LUCIE. That doesn't count. All my life I've helped others. So I am quits, and I say I can go. You'll allow me to look after myself?

CANORIS. No.

LUCIE. Fool! Idiot! Oh yes, you can live! Your conscience is clear! They've knocked you about a bit, that's all. But they have destroyed me—there isn't a piece of my own skin that doesn't sicken me. You take on airs because you strangled a boy! Remember that boy was my brother, and I said nothing. I took all the blame on myself. I must die and all my shame with me. Get out! Get out—live, since that's what you want. But I cannot bear myself, and after my death I pray that everything on earth may be as though I had never lived.

CANORIS [*gently*]. You do take yourself seriously, don't you?

LUCIE [*disconcerted*]. What?

CANORIS. You do take your body seriously. And your life, and your death, and the boy's death. Come now, Lucie: none of that matters.

LUCIE. My hate and my shame and my remorse—does none of that matter?

CANORIS. Bah! Buzzing in your ears.

LUCIE. What about the men who tortured us? Their eyes gleamed when they realized you were going to squeal. You've given them back their self-respect.

CANORIS. They are men of straw. In six months they'll be skulking in a cellar, and the first grenade tossed in through a ventilator will write *finis* to this whole story.

LUCIE. What does matter?

CANORIS. Everything else. The world and what you do in the world; our friends and what you do for them.

LUCIE. I am dried up. I feel so alone. I don't want to think of anyone but myself.

HENRI. It's your pride that isolates you. You're clinging to yourself, and you're afraid to open your hands. I was afraid. You must let go—you must relax.

ACT THREE

LUCIE. If I relaxed, I'd become stupid. I would cry.

HENRI. Why keep back your tears? Be humble. Oh, I know, heroes don't cry. But the orders have changed. No one wants us to be heroes any more. We must live. Won't you regret anything on the earth?

LUCIE. Nothing. Everything has been poisoned.

HENRI. Even the pale sky over the Tigne? Even the snow around the lake? You'll see it again, if you live. You'll see it again. Remember the children we used to meet, in the spring, sitting on the fallen trees, outside the saw-mill. They smiled at us as we passed, and we could smell the freshly sawn wood.

LUCIE. Poor kids.

HENRI. Won't you miss them?

LUCIE. They ran away when the Germans arrived. I wouldn't be able to find them again.

HENRI. There'll be other kids in the concentration camps. Even there, we'll be able to see the sky.

It starts to rain outside, beginning slowly, but the wind blows it gustily against the roof, and soon it is raining heavily.

LUCIE. What's that—rain? I haven't heard the rain for three months. Oh God! All this time the sun has been shining—it was horrible. I didn't remember. I thought we always had to live in the sun. It's raining hard. We are going to smell the wet earth. I can't! I can't!

HENRI. Lucie! Lucie!

LUCIE. I don't want to cry. I don't want to be so stupid. . . . Let me go. . . . I want to live. I want to live.

HENRI *puts his arms round her.*

LUCIE. Is it really true we are going to live? I was nearly on the other side. Look at me. Smile at me. It's so long since I saw a smile. [HENRI looks at her, and they smile.] Are we doing right, Henri, are we doing right?

CANORIS. Of course we are doing right. We've got to live! [*He goes to the Militiaman.*] Go and tell them we're ready to talk. *The Militiaman goes out.* LANDRIEU, PELLERIN and CLOCHET return.

LANDRIEU. Well?

CANORIS. On the road to Grenoble, at the forty-second milestone, take the right-hand path. Fifty metres inside the forest

MEN WITHOUT SHADOWS

you'll find a copse. Behind the copse there is a grotto. Our captain is hidden there with our guns.

LANDRIEU [*to the Militiaman*]. Ten men. Leave at once. Try and bring him back alive. [*Pause.*] Take the prisoners back upstairs.

The Militiamen take the prisoners out. CLOCHET hesitates for a moment, then slips out after them.

PELLERIN. Think they were telling the truth?

LANDRIEU. Of course. They're just animals. [*He sits down at the desk.*] Well! We got them in the end. Did you see them go out? They were not so proud as when they came in. [*CLOCHET returns. Amiably.*] Well, Clochet? We got them, didn't we?

CLOCHET [*rubbing his hands absentmindedly*]. Yes, yes. We got them in the end.

PELLERIN. Are you really going to let them live?

LANDRIEU. Oh, for the time being anyway. . . . [*A salvo rings out from under the window.*] What the hell . . . ? [*CLOCHET sniggers in a slightly embarrassed way.*] Clochet, you haven't . . . [*CLOCHET nods, still laughing.*] Bastard!

Second salvo. He runs to the window.

PELLERIN. Wait for it—third time lucky.

LANDRIEU. I won't allow . . .

PELLERIN. What would the survivor think of us?

CLOCHET. In a moment, no one will think of this any more. No one but us.

Third salvo. LANDRIEU sinks into a chair.

LANDRIEU. Ouf!

CLOCHET goes to the radio and turns the knob. *Music.*

CURTAIN

THE RESPECTABLE PROSTITUTE

(La Putain Respectueuse)

CHARACTERS

LIZZIE

FRED

THE NEGRO

JOHN

JAMES

THE SENATOR

TOWNSPEOPLE

*The scene of the play is a town in the
Deep South*

THE RESPECTABLE PROSTITUTE was presented at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, on 16th July, 1947, with the following cast:

LIZZIE

Betty Ann Davies

FRED

David Markham

THE NEGRO

Orlando Martins

JOHN

Alan Tilvern

JAMES

Dale MacDonald

THE SENATOR

Hugh Griffith

TOWNSPEOPLE

Mary Shaw, Derek Ensor

Alan Badel

The production was by Peter Brook and the setting by Rolf Gérard.

THE RESPECTABLE PROSTITUTE

SCENE ONE

A room in a town in the Deep South. White walls. A divan bed. At right, a window, at left, a door leading to the bathroom. At back, a little anteroom leading to the front door. Before the curtain rises, a sound as of a storm on the stage. When the curtain rises, LIZZIE is alone, in a skirt and blouse, using a vacuum-cleaner. The doorbell rings. She hesitates, looks towards the bathroom door. The bell rings again. She stops the Hoover and going to the bathroom door, opens it a little way.

LIZZIE [*softly*]. There's someone at the door. Don't come out.

[*She opens the door. THE NEGRO appears framed in the doorway.*

He is very tall and fat with white hair. He stands very stiffly.]

What is it? You've come to the wrong door. [*Pause.*] Well, what do you want? Can't you speak?

THE NEGRO [*supplicating*]. Please, mam, please, mam.

LIZZIE. Please, what? [*She looks at him more closely.*] Just a minute. Weren't you in the train? You managed to escape?

How did you find my address?

THE NEGRO. I looked for it, mam. I looked for it everywhere.

[*He takes a step forward.*] Please, mam.

LIZZIE. Don't come in. There's someone here. What do you want?

THE NEGRO. Nothin'.

LIZZIE. What is it? What is it? Do you want money?

THE NEGRO [*pause*]. Please, mam, tell him I didn't do nothin'.

LIZZIE. Tell who?

THE NEGRO. The judge. Tell him, mam. Please, mam, tell the judge.

LIZZIE. Look, I shan't tell him anything. I've got enough troubles of my own, without getting mixed up in other people's. Now go away.

THE NEGRO. You know I didn't do nothin'.

THE RESPECTABLE PROSTITUTE

LIZZIE. Sure, you didn't do anything. But I ain't going to no judge. Judges and cops, they give me the bellyache.

THE NEGRO. I got a wife and kids. . . . I been walking all night. I can't go no further.

LIZZIE. Get out of town.

THE NEGRO. They'se watching the railroads.

LIZZIE. Who's watching?

THE NEGRO. The white folk.

LIZZIE. What white folk?

THE NEGRO. All the white folk. You ain't been out this mornin'?

LIZZIE. No. I haven't.

THE NEGRO. The streets is all full of people. Young folk and old folk; all talking together.

LIZZIE. How d'you mean?

THE NEGRO. That means I'se just got to run round and round till they catches me. When white folk start talking to strangers, some black man gonna die. [*Pause.*] Tell them I didn't do nothin', mam. Tell the judge. Tell the newspaper boys. Maybe they'll print what you say. Tell them, mam, tell them, tell them!

LIZZIE. Don't shout. I tell you there's someone here. [*Pause.*] Tell the papers—not on your life. I don't want any publicity right now. [*Pause.*] If they call me as a witness, I promise to tell the truth.

THE NEGRO. You'll tell them I didn't do nothin'?

LIZZIE. I'll tell them.

THE NEGRO. Swear you'll tell them, mam?

LIZZIE. Yes, yes.

THE NEGRO. Swear by de Lord, you'll tell them?

LIZZIE. Oh, go to hell! I've told you I will, that's enough. [*Pause.*] Get out!

THE NEGRO [*suddenly*]. Please, mam, hide me.

LIZZIE. Hide you?

THE NEGRO. Won't you, please?

LIZZIE. Hide you! Me? That's too much. [*She slams the door in his face.*] Gee, I've got enough troubles. [*She turns to the bathroom.*] You can come out now.

FRED comes out of the bathroom in his shirt-sleeves, without collar or tie.

SCENE ONE

FRED. Who was that?

LIZZIE. No one.

FRED. I thought it was the police.

LIZZIE. Police? Hey, are you in trouble with the police?

FRED. Me? No. But I thought you might be.

LIZZIE [*offended*]. I like that. I've never stolen a cent from anyone!

FRED. You've never been in trouble with the police?

LIZZIE. Not for stealing, anyway.

She gets busy with the Hoover. The noise is deafening.

FRED [*annoyed by the noise*]. Hey!

LIZZIE [*shouting to make herself heard*]. What is it, sweetheart?

FRED [*shouting*]. You're deafening me.

LIZZIE [*shouting*]. Nearly finished. [*Pause.*] I'm like that.

FRED [*shouting*]. What?

LIZZIE [*shouting*]. I say I'm like that.

FRED [*shouting*]. Like what?

LIZZIE [*shouting*]. Like that. The next morning I just have to take a bath and Hoover the carpet. [*She turns it off.*]

FRED [*pointing to the bed*]. While you're at it, cover that up.

LIZZIE. What?

FRED. The bed. I said cover it up. It stinks of sin.

LIZZIE. Sin? Where did you learn that word? You're not a preacher, are you?

FRED. No. Why?

LIZZIE. You talk like one. [*She looks at him.*] No, you're no preacher; you're much too clean. Let me see your ring. [*With admiration.*] Boy, oh boy! Are you rich?

FRED. Yes.

LIZZIE. Very rich?

FRED. Very.

LIZZIE. That's fine. [*She puts her arms round his neck and offers him her lips.*] I think it's much better for a man to be rich. It inspires confidence.

He doesn't kiss her, and after a moment turns away.

FRED. Cover the bed.

LIZZIE. Okay! Okay! I'll cover it up. [*She covers the bed, and suddenly begins to laugh.*] 'Stinks of sin.' I'd never have

THE RESPECTABLE PROSTITUTE

thought of that. You know, boy, it's *your* sin. [*Fred makes a movement.*] Yes, I know, mine too. But I've had so many sins on my conscience . . . [*She sits down on the bed and makes FRED sit beside her.*] Come here. Come and sit down. Don't look away. Do I scare you? [*FRED suddenly catches her brutally to him.*] You're hurting me! You're hurting me! [*He lets her go.*] Gee, you're a funny boy! [*Pause.*] Hey, what's your name? Come on! I don't like not knowing your name. They hardly ever tell me their last names, and I can understand that. But their first names! How do you think I'm to tell one from the other if I don't know your names? Come on, sweetheart.

FRED. No.

LIZZIE. Okay, you'll be the one without a name. [*She gets up.*] Wait. I'm going to finish doing the room. [*She moves a few pieces of furniture.*] There. There. Everything tidy again. The chairs round the table—that always looks classy. Say, do you know where I can find a picture store? I want to buy some pictures. I got one in my box, a beauty. It's called 'The Broken Pitcher.' It's a picture of a little girl, and her pitcher is broken, poor thing. It's French.

FRED. What pitcher?

LIZZIE. I don't know: her pitcher. I guess she had a pitcher. I'd like a picture of an old grandmother to go opposite her. An old grandmother knitting, or telling stories to her grandchildren. Ah! I'm going to pull the blinds and open the window. [*She does so.*] Oh, what a beautiful morning! A whole new day beginning. [*She stretches.*] Gee! I feel wonderful; it's a glorious morning, I've had a grand bath, and I made love beautifully last night: I feel fine. I feel real fine! Come and see my view. Come and look. I've got a swell view. Ain't I lucky; my very first day and I found a room in the ritzy part of town. Ain't you coming? Don't you like looking at your town?

FRED. Yeah, from my own window.

LIZZIE [*suddenly*]. It ain't bad luck, is it, if the first person you see in the morning is a negro?

FRED. Why?

LIZZIE. I . . . I can see one on the sidewalk.

SCENE ONE

FRED. It's always bad luck to see niggers. Niggers are the devil.
[Pause.] Shut the window.

LIZZIE. Don't you want me to air the room?

FRED. I told you to shut the window. Right. And pull the blind. Turn the lights on.

LIZZIE. Why? Because of the negroes? It's real nice in the sunlight.

FRED. No sunlight in here. I want your room to stay as it was last night. Now, shut the window, I said. I can get all the sunlight I want outside. [*He gets up, goes to her and looks at her.*]

LIZZIE [*vaguely troubled*]. What's the matter?

FRED. Nothing. Give me my tie.

LIZZIE. Okay; it's in the bathroom. [*She goes out. FRED quickly opens the drawers of the table and goes through them. LIZZIE comes back with the tie.*] Here it is! Come and I'll put it on for you. There. [*She ties it for him.*] You know, I don't like casual trade much, it means too many new faces. I'd like to settle down with three or four regulars, one for Tuesdays, one for Thursdays, and one for the week-end. I'm just telling you that. You're a bit young, but you're the serious type, and you might like the idea. Oh, I'm not saying any more. You can think about it. There! There! Gee, you're good-looking. Kiss me, handsome, kiss me. [*He kisses her roughly and then pushes her away.*] Oh!

FRED. You're the devil.

LIZZIE. Still talking like a preacher. What's the matter with you?

FRED. Nothing. I'm sick of myself.

LIZZIE. You got funny ways of showing it. [*Pause.*] Are you pleased?

FRED. Pleased with what?

LIZZIE [*imitating him, smiling*]. Pleased with what? What a silly little girl you are.

FRED. Oh. Oh yes . . . very pleased. Very pleased. How much do you want?

LIZZIE. Who's talking of money? I asked you if you were pleased, you might answer politely. What's the matter? Didn't you like me? Don't say you didn't like me?

THE RESPECTABLE PROSTITUTE

FRED. Shut up.

LIZZIE. You took me in your arms and held me hard. And then very softly you said you loved me.

FRED. You were tight.

LIZZIE. No, I was not tight.

FRED. I say you were tight.

LIZZIE. I tell you I was not.

FRED. Well, I was. I don't remember anything.

LIZZIE. What a pity. I undressed in the bathroom, and when I came back, you blushed. Don't you remember? Don't you remember that I called you my little lobster? You turned out the light and made love to me in the dark. I thought that was very nice and respectable. Don't you remember?

FRED. No.

LIZZIE. And when we pretended we were two new-born babies in the same cradle? You remember that?

FRED. I told you to shut up. What a man does at night, belongs to the night. In the morning, you don't talk about it.

LIZZIE [*defiantly*]. And if I like talking about it? I enjoyed myself a lot, you know.

FRED. Oh, so you enjoyed yourself! [*He goes up to her, caresses her shoulders gently and then closes his hands round her neck.*] Do you always enjoy yourself when you think you've fooled a man? [*Pause.*] I've forgotten last night. Completely forgotten it. I remember the nightclub, that's all. After that, you're the only one who remembers. The only one. [*He squeezes her neck.*]

LIZZIE. What are you doing?

FRED. I'm squeezing your throat.

LIZZIE. You're hurting me.

FRED. The only one. If I squeeze a little harder, there'll be no one left in the world who remembers last night. [*He lets her go.*] How much do you want?

LIZZIE. If you've forgotten, it's because I wasn't very good. I don't want to be paid for something that wasn't very good.

FRED. Stop jawing. How much?

LIZZIE. Listen. I only got into town the day before yesterday. You were my first customer. I won't charge the first one, for luck.

SCENE ONE

FRED. I guess I don't need your presents. [*He lays a ten-dollar bill on the table.*]

LIZZIE. I don't want your money, but I'm going to see what you think I'm worth. Wait, let me guess! [*She takes the note and closes her eyes.*] Forty bucks? No. That's too much, and there would be two bills. Twenty bucks? More? Then it must be more than forty bucks. Fifty? A hundred? [*All this while, FRED watches her, laughing silently.*] Oh well, I'll open my eyes. [*She looks at the note.*] Sure you didn't make a mistake?

FRED. I don't think so.

LIZZIE. You know what you've given me?

FRED. Yes.

LIZZIE. Take it back. Take it back at once. [*He refuses with a gesture.*] Ten dollars! Ten dollars! A girl like me, for ten dollars! I'll see you in hell first. You've seen my legs? [*She shows them.*] And my breasts, you've seen them? Are they ten-dollar breasts? Take your dirty money and get the hell out of here before I lose my temper. Ten dollars! You kissed me all over, you kept wanting to start all over again, you wanted me to tell you my life-story; and this morning, you were bad tempered, you bossed me around as if you'd paid for a whole month; and all that for how much? Not forty, not thirty, not even twenty; for *ten* dollars.

FRED. Yeah, quite enough too, for a slut.

LIZZIE. Slut! Slut! What are you, I'd like to know? What kind of a mother have you got, that she didn't teach you to respect a woman?

FRED. Shut your mouth!

LIZZIE. Son of a bitch! You son of a bitch!

FRED [*in an unnaturally calm voice*]. Listen, my girl! Don't talk to our boys too much about their mothers, or you'll get your neck wrung.

LIZZIE [*rushing up to him*]. Okay! Go ahead!

FRED [*backing away*]. Oh, shut up. [*LIZZIE picks up a vase from the table with the evident intention of braining him.*] Here's another ten dollars, but shut up. Shut up, or I'll have you put in jail.

LIZZIE. You'll have me locked up?

THE RESPECTABLE PROSTITUTE

FRED. I will.

LIZZIE. You will?

FRED. I will.

LIZZIE. Don't give me that!

FRED [*violently*]. I'm Wilson Clarke's son.

LIZZIE. Who?

FRED. Senator Clarke's son.

LIZZIE. Yeah! And I'm Truman's daughter.

FRED. You've seen pictures of the Senator in the papers?

LIZZIE. So what?

FRED. Look here. [*He shows her a photo.*] I'm standing beside him, he's got his hand on my shoulder.

LIZZIE [*suddenly calm*]. Say! That your old man? Say! [*FRED snatches the picture from her.*]

FRED. That's enough.

LIZZIE. Ain't he good-looking, though? He looks so good, so wise! [*FRED doesn't reply.*] Is that your garden?

FRED. Yes.

LIZZIE. And the little girls, are they your sisters? [*He doesn't reply.*] Your home's up on the hill?

FRED. Yes.

LIZZIE. So, in the morning, when you have breakfast, you can see the whole town from your window?

FRED. Yes.

LIZZIE. Do they ring a bell at meal-times to call you? You might tell me.

FRED. We have a gong.

LIZZIE [*ecstatically*]. A gong! I don't understand you. If I had a family like that, and a home like that, you'd have to pay me to sleep away from home. [*Pause.*] I'm sorry I said that about your mother; I was mad. Is she in the picture, too?

FRED. I told you not to mention her.

LIZZIE Okay, okay. [*Pause.*] Can I ask you something? [*He doesn't reply.*] If you don't like making love, why did you come home with me? [*He doesn't reply. She sighs.*] Oh well! If you're going to stick around, I guess I'll have to get used to you.

Pause. FRED *combs his hair in front of the glass.*

FRED. You come from the North?

SCENE ONE

LIZZIE. Yes.

FRED. From New York?

LIZZIE. What's that to you?

FRED. You talked about New York last night.

LIZZIE. Anyone can talk about New York. That doesn't prove a thing.

FRED. Why didn't you stay there?

LIZZIE. I was sick of the place.

FRED. In trouble?

LIZZIE. Naturally. Trouble always comes to me, some people are like that. See this snake? [*She shows him a bracelet.*] It's his fault. He's my jinx.

FRED. Why do you wear it?

LIZZIE. As long as I've got it, I must wear it. They say the bad luck snakes bring is real bad.

FRED. Are you the girl the nigger tried to rape?

LIZZIE. What?

FRED. You got here yesterday morning on the six o'clock express?

LIZZIE. Uh-huh.

FRED. Then it was you.

LIZZIE. No one tried to rape me. [*She laughs a little bitterly.*]

Rape me! See what I mean?

FRED. It was you. Webster told me last night, at the club.

LIZZIE [*pause.*]. So that's it. That's why your eyes were shining so. It excited you, eh? With such a good father, too.

FRED. [*Pause.*] If I really thought you'd slept with a nigger . . .

LIZZIE. Well?

FRED. I've got five coloured servants. When there's a call for me and one of them picks up the telephone, he wipes it before handing it to me.

LIZZIE [*with an admiring whistle*]. Gee!

FRED [*softly*]. We don't like niggers much here. Nor white girls who play around with them.

LIZZIE. That's all right. I've got nothing against them, but I wouldn't like them to touch me.

FRED. How do I know? You're the devil. Niggers are the devil too . . . [*Abruptly.*] So? He tried to rape you?

LIZZIE. What's it got to do with you?

THE RESPECTABLE PROSTITUTE

FRED. Two of them got into your compartment. After a little while they attacked you. You called for help and some white men came to help you. One of the negroes pulled out a razor and a white man shot him with a revolver. The other nigger got away. . . . Was that what happened?

LIZZIE. Of course it wasn't. The two negroes were sitting perfectly still, talking together; they didn't even look at me. Then, four white boys got in, and two of them made a pass at me. They'd just won a football game, and they were tight. They said the place stank of niggers, and they wanted to throw them out of the window. The coloured boys did their best to defend themselves, and finally one of the white boys got a sock in the eye. Then he pulled a gun and fired. That's all. The other negro jumped off the train as we got into the station.

FRED. We know him. He won't lose anything by waiting.
[Pause.] Is that what you're going to say when you come up before the judge?

LIZZIE. But what's it got to do with you?

FRED. Answer me.

LIZZIE. I ain't going to no judge. I tell you I hate trouble.

FRED. All the same, you'll have to go.

LIZZIE. I won't. I don't want anything to do with the cops.

FRED. They'll come and get you.

LIZZIE. Then I'll tell them what I saw.

FRED. You realize what you'll be doing?

LIZZIE. Doing?

FRED. You'll be defending a black man against a white.

LIZZIE. But the white man is guilty.

FRED. He isn't guilty.

LIZZIE. He shot a man, of course he's guilty.

FRED. Guilty of what?

LIZZIE. Of murder!

FRED. He only shot a nigger.

LIZZIE. Well?

FRED. If one is guilty of murder every time one kills a nigger . . .

LIZZIE. He had no right.

FRED. What right?

LIZZIE. He had no right.

SCENE ONE

FRED. That's just Yankee talk. [*Pause.*] Guilty or no, you can't condemn a boy like him.

LIZZIE. Look, I don't want to condemn anyone. If they ask me what I saw, I'll tell them.

FRED *marches up to her.*

FRED. What's between you and this nigger? Why are you trying to protect him?

LIZZIE. I don't even know him.

FRED. Well then?

LIZZIE. I must tell the truth!

FRED. The truth? A ten-dollar whore must tell the truth! There is no truth; there are white men and black men and that's all. Seventeen thousand whites, twenty thousand blacks. This isn't New York; we have no right to fool around. [*Pause.*] Tom is my cousin.

LIZZIE. Who?

FRED. Tom. The guy with the gun. He's my cousin.

LIZZIE [*understanding*]. Oh!

FRED. He comes of a very good family. Maybe that doesn't mean much to you; but he comes of a very good family.

LIZZIE. A man who comes of a very good family; who pressed himself against me and tried to lift my skirts. I can do without that sort of good family! I'm not at all surprised to find you're related.

FRED [*raising his hand, then restrains himself*]. You're a devil. You make a devil of everyone you meet.

LIZZIE. Let me go.

FRED. He made a pass at you—he shot a nigger—what does it matter? Those are things one does without thinking, they don't count. Tom is a born leader, that's what matters. . . .

LIZZIE. Maybe. But the negro hadn't done nothing.

FRED. A nigger has always done something.

LIZZIE. I ain't giving no man away to no cops.

FRED. It's Tom or the nigger; you've got to sacrifice one. It's up to you to choose.

LIZZIE. So that's it. I'm up to the neck in it this time, and no mistake. [*To her bracelet.*] Bloody jinx, this is what you do to me all the time! [*She takes it off and throws it on the bed.*]

FRED. How much do you want?

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LIZZIE. I don't want a cent.

FRED. Five hundred dollars.

LIZZIE. Not a red cent.

FRED. It would take you far more than one night to earn five hundred bucks.

LIZZIE. Particularly if I only meet up with skin-flints like you. [*Pause.*] So that was why you picked me up last night? So that was it. You thought: that's the girl. I'll go home with her and start the ball rolling. So that was it! You pawed me all over but you were as cold as ice, and you were thinking: how am I going to bring her round? [*Pause.*] But just a minute . . . just a minute, little man. . . . If you came home with me to make your proposition, you didn't have to sleep with me. Hey? Why did you sleep with me, you bastard? Why did you sleep with me?

FRED. I'll be god-damned if I know. Five hundred dollars! Stop bawling! God Almighty! Five hundred dollars. Stop bawling! Stop bawling! Listen, Lizzie! Lizzie! Be reasonable! Five hundred bucks!

LIZZIE [*sobbing*]. I won't be reasonable. I don't want your five hundred bucks, I won't lie to the judge! I want to go back to New York, I want to get out of here! I want to get out of here! [*The doorbell rings. She stops abruptly. The bell rings again.*] I won't open the door.

Furious knocking.

A VOICE [*off*]. Open. Police.

LIZZIE [*softly*]. The cops. I might have known. [*She shows the bracelet. She bends down and puts it back on her wrist.*]

Go and hide, in the bathroom.

More knocking.

THE VOICE. Police!

FRED *doesn't move. She pushes him with all her strength.*

THE VOICE. Are you there, Clarke? Clarke? Are you there?

FRED. I'm here!

He pushes her away. She looks at him in amazement.

LIZZIE. So that's it!

FRED *opens the door. JOHN and JAMES enter, leaving the front door open.*

JOHN. Police. Are you Lizzie MacKay?

SCENE ONE

LIZZIE [*without hearing him, gazing at FRED*]. So that was it!

JOHN [*shaking her by the shoulder*]. Answer when you're spoken to.

LIZZIE [*recovering herself. Bitterly*]. What are you doing in my apartment? [JOHN *shows his badge*.] Anyone can carry a badge. You are this guy's pals and you're out to get me.

JOHN *thrusts a card under her nose*.

JOHN. Recognize that?

LIZZIE [*indicating JAMES*]. What about him?

JOHN [*to JAMES*]. Show her your card.

JAMES *produces it*. LIZZIE *looks at it, goes to the table without a word, pulls out some papers and gives them to him*.

JOHN [*meaning FRED*]. Did you bring him home with you last night? Don't you know prostitution is a criminal offence in this state?

LIZZIE. Are you quite sure you can come busting into people's houses without a warrant? Ain't you afraid I might make it hot for you?

JOHN. Don't worry about us. [*Pause*.] I asked you if you brought this man home with you last night.

LIZZIE *has changed since the entrance of the police officers. She has become harder and more vulgar*.

LIZZIE. Keep your shirt on. Sure, I brought him home. Only I made love for nothing. That makes you think, don't it?

FRED. You'll find two ten-dollar bills on the table. They are mine.

LIZZIE. Prove it.

FRED [*without looking at her, to the two others*]. I got them from the bank yesterday morning, with twenty-eight others of the same serial number. You can check the numbers with the bank.

LIZZIE. I wouldn't take them. I wouldn't take his filthy money. I threw them back in his face.

JOHN. If you wouldn't take them, why are they still on the table?

LIZZIE [*after a silence*]. You've got me. [*She looks at FRED in a sort of stupor and says, almost gently*.] So it was for this? [*To the others*.] Well? What do you want me to do?

JOHN. Sit down. [*To FRED*.] Did you tell her? [*FRED nods*.] I told you to sit down. [*He forces her into a chair*.] Now, the

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judge has agreed to release Tom if he has your written testimony. We've drawn it up for you, you've only got to sign. Tomorrow, you'll be questioned officially. Can you read? [LIZZIE *shrugs her shoulders; he holds out a paper.*] Read it and sign.

LIZZIE. It's a lie from beginning to end.

JOHN. So what?

LIZZIE. I won't sign.

FRED. Take her away. [To LIZZIE.] It'll be eighteen months.

LIZZIE. Eighteen months, okay. And when I come out, I'll have your neck for this.

FRED. Not if I can help it. [*They look at each other.*] You should telegraph New York; I think she had a little trouble there.

LIZZIE [*admiringly*]. You're as low as a woman. I'd never have believed a man could be so low.

JOHN. Make up your mind. Sign or I take you to the court-house.

LIZZIE. Take me. I won't lie.

FRED. You won't lie! And what else did you do all night? When you called me your darling, your love, your sweetheart, weren't you lying? When you sighed, to make me believe you liked me, weren't you lying?

LIZZIE [*defiantly*]. That would make you feel better, eh? No, I wasn't lying. [*They look at each other. FRED drops his eyes.*]

FRED. Let's get this over with. Here's my pen. Sign.

LIZZIE. You can go and hang yourself.

Pause. The three men are embarrassed.

FRED. So this is what it's come to! He's the finest guy in town and his future is in the hands of this slut. [*He walks up and down, then abruptly comes back to LIZZIE.*] Look at him. [*He shows her a photograph.*] You've seen some men in your filthy life. Are there many like him? Don't worry, when he gets out of jail, in ten years time, he'll look an old man. You can be proud of yourself, you're doing a fine job. Up to now, you've only taken the money from our pockets. This time, you've taken the pick of the bunch and you're stealing his life. Can't you say something? Are you rotten to the bone? [*He forces her to kneel.*] Kneel, you tramp!!

SENATOR CLARKE *enters by the door they left open.*

SCENE ONE

THE SENATOR. Let her go.

FRED. Hullo, Dad!

JOHN. Hullo, Senator!

CLARKE. Hullo, boys! [*To LIZZIE.*] Please get up.

JOHN [*to LIZZIE*]. This is Senator Clarke.

CLARKE [*to LIZZIE*]. Hullo, Lizzie!

LIZZIE. Hullo!

CLARKE. Now we all know each other. That's fine. [*He looks at LIZZIE.*] Let's have a look at this young lady. She looks — as though she has a kind heart.

FRED. She won't sign.

CLARKE. She is perfectly right. You enter her apartment without any authorization. [*JOHN makes a movement of protest. Emphatically.*] Without the least authorization. You treat her roughly and you try to make her speak against her conscience. That's a very un-American way to behave. Did the negro rape you, my child?

LIZZIE. No.

CLARKE. Fine. No mistake about that. Look at me. [*He looks at her.*] I'm sure she's not lying. [*Pause.*] Poor Mary! [*To the others.*] Well, boys, we must be getting along. There's nothing more we can do here. We must just apologize to Miss MacKay.

FRED, JOHN and JAMES go out.

LIZZIE. Who's Mary?

CLARKE. Mary? My sister, the mother of our unlucky Thomas. A dear old lady. This will kill her. Good-bye, my child. [*He moves to go.*]

LIZZIE [*in a strangled voice*]. Senator! [*She rushes after him.*]

CLARKE. My child?

LIZZIE. I'm sorry.

CLARKE. Why should you be sorry, when you're telling the truth?

LIZZIE. I'm sorry the truth should be . . . like that.

CLARKE. There's nothing either of us can do, and no one has the right to ask you to perjure yourself. [*Pause.*] No. Don't give her another thought.

LIZZIE. Who?

CLARKE. My sister. You won't think of her, will you?

THE RESPECTABLE PROSTITUTE

LIZZIE. Of course I will.

SENATOR. I can see through you, my child. Shall I tell you what you're thinking? [*Imitating LIZZIE.*] 'If I sign, the Senator will go to her, he will say: "Lizzie MacKay is a good girl, she is giving you back your son." And she will smile through her tears, and she will say: "Lizzie MacKay? I will never forget her name." And I who have no family, whom Fate has put outside the pale of Society, I will have a little old lady, sitting in her big house, who thinks of me. There will be one American mother who has adopted me in her heart.' Poor Lizzie, forget it.

LIZZIE. Is her hair white?

SENATOR. White as snow. But her face is as young as ever. If you could only see her smile. . . . She will never smile again. Good-bye.

LIZZIE. Are you going?

SENATOR. Why, yes: I'm going to her. I must tell her of our conversation.

LIZZIE. She knows you're here?

SENATOR. She asked me to come.

LIZZIE. My God! She's waiting for you? And you'll tell her I refused to sign. She'll hate me for this.

SENATOR [*putting his hands on her shoulders*]. My poor child, I wouldn't like to be in your shoes.

LIZZIE. What a set-up! With things as they are, the negro might just as well have raped me.

SENATOR [*moved*]. My poor child!

LIZZIE [*sadly*]. Yeah, you would have been so pleased, and it wouldn't have meant so much to me.

SENATOR. Thank you! [*Pause.*] I wish I could help you. [*Pause.*] But truth is truth.

LIZZIE [*sadly*]. Yeah.

SENATOR. And the truth is the negro didn't rape you.

LIZZIE. That's right.

SENATOR. Yes. [*Pause.*] Naturally, it's really a question of a fundamental truth.

LIZZIE [*not understanding*]. Fundamental?

SENATOR. Yes. I mean a . . . primary truth.

LIZZIE. Primary? Isn't it just the truth?

SCENE ONE

SENATOR. Yes, yes, of course it's the truth. Only . . . there are several degrees of truth.

LIZZIE. You think the negro did rape me?

SENATOR. No. No. He didn't rape you. From one point of view, he didn't rape you at all. But you see, I am an old man and I've lived a long time, and made many mistakes; but these last few years, I've made fewer mistakes. And I think rather differently about this than you.

LIZZIE. How d'you mean?

SENATOR. How can I explain? Listen. Let's imagine Uncle Sam suddenly walked through that door. What do you think he would say?

LIZZIE [*frightened*]. Oh, I don't think he'd have much to say to me.

SENATOR. Are you a Communist?

LIZZIE. What an idea! Of course not!

SENATOR. Then he'd have plenty to say to you! He'd say: 'Lizzie, you've got to choose between two of my sons. One or other of them must disappear. What does one do in a case like that? You keep the better of the two. Well, let's decide which is better. Shall we?'

LIZZIE. Sure. Let's.

SENATOR. 'Lizzie, this negro you are protecting, what use is he? He was born God knows where. I have fed him and what does he do for me in return? Nothing at all. He doesn't work, he loafs and sings all day; he buys zoot suits and fancy ties. He is my son, and I love him as a son. But I ask you; is he living a man's life? I wouldn't even notice his death.'

LIZZIE. You're a swell speaker.

SENATOR [*continuing*]. 'The other boy, this Thomas, has killed a black man, which is very bad. But I need him. He is one hundred per cent American, the son of one of our oldest families; he went to Harvard. He is an officer—and I need officers—he employs two thousand workmen in his factory—two thousand men out of a job if he dies—he is a leader of men, a solid rampart against communism, trade unionism and the Jews. His duty is to live, and your duty is to save his life. That's all. Now choose.'

LIZZIE. How beautifully you speak.

THE RESPECTABLE PROSTITUTE

SENATOR. Choose!

LIZZIE [*jumping*]. What? Oh yes . . . [*Pause.*] You've got me all mixed up. I don't know where I am any more.

SENATOR. Look at me, Lizzie. Do you trust me?

LIZZIE. Yes, Senator.

SENATOR. Do you think I would tell you to do anything wrong?

LIZZIE. No, Senator.

SENATOR. Then you must sign. Here is my pen.

LIZZIE. You think she'll be pleased with me?

SENATOR. Who?

LIZZIE. Your sister.

SENATOR. She will love you like a daughter.

LIZZIE. Perhaps she'll send me some flowers?

SENATOR. Very likely.

LIZZIE. Or a signed photograph?

SENATOR. Probably.

LIZZIE. I'd hang it on the wall. [*Pause. She walks up and down.*] What a mess! [*Coming back to the SENATOR.*] What will you do to the negro, if I sign?

SENATOR. The negro? Bah! [*He takes her by the shoulders.*] If you sign, the whole town will adopt you. The whole town. All the mothers of the town.

LIZZIE. But . . .

SENATOR. Do you think a whole town can be wrong? A whole town, with its priests and ministers, its doctors, its lawyers and painters, with its mayor and town councillors and all the charitable institutions? Do you really think so?

LIZZIE. No, no, no.

FRED, JOHN and JAMES come in. They remain by the door.

SENATOR. Give me your hand. [*He forces her to sign.*] There, Lizzie. I thank you in the name of my sister and my nephew, in the name of the seventeen thousand white men of our town, in the name of Uncle Sam and the American Nation which I represent. [*He kisses her on the forehead.*] Good-bye, my child. [*To LIZZIE.*] I'll see you again; we have more to say to each other. Come along, boys.

He goes out.

FRED. Good-bye, Lizzie.

SCENE ONE

LIZZIE. Good-bye. [*They go out. She remains crushed, then suddenly rushes to the door.*] Senator! Senator! Come back! Tear up that paper! Senator! [*She comes back into the room, and picks up the vacuum cleaner mechanically.*] Uncle Sam and the American Nation! [*She puts in the plug and pushes the vacuum cleaner up and down furiously.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE TWO

The scene is the same. Twelve hours later. The lights are on, the windows open on the darkness. Noise outside, which grows. The NEGRO appears at the window, climbs over it, and jumps down into the room. He gets as far as the middle of the stage when the bell rings. He hides behind a curtain. LIZZIE comes out of the bathroom, goes to the front door and opens it.

LIZZIE. Come in. [*The SENATOR enters.*] Well?

SENATOR. Thomas is in his mother's arms. I come to bring you their thanks.

LIZZIE. She's happy?

SENATOR. Completely happy.

LIZZIE. Sit down.

SENATOR. Thank you.

LIZZIE. Did she cry?

SENATOR. Cry? Why should she? She's a brave woman.

LIZZIE. You told me she was crying.

SENATOR. A figure of speech.

LIZZIE. She wasn't expecting it, was she? She thought I was a bad girl, and that I would stand up for the negro.

SENATOR. She gave herself up to the mercy of God.

LIZZIE. What does she think of me?

THE RESPECTABLE PROSTITUTE

SENATOR. She thanks you.

LIZZIE. Did she ask you what I was like?

SENATOR. No.

LIZZIE. Does she think I've behaved well?

SENATOR. She thinks you did the right thing.

LIZZIE. Yeah . . .

SENATOR. She hopes you will always do the right thing.

LIZZIE. Yeah . . .

SENATOR. Look at me, Lizzie. [*He takes her by the shoulders.*]

You will go on doing the right thing, won't you? You wouldn't want to disappoint her.

LIZZIE. Don't worry. I can't go back on my word; they'd put me in jug. [*Pause.*] What's all that shouting?

SENATOR. Nothing.

LIZZIE. I can't bear it any more. [*She goes to the window.*]
Senator?

SENATOR. My dear?

LIZZIE. You're sure we haven't made a mistake, that I have done the right thing?

SENATOR. Absolutely sure.

The noise outside grows louder.

LIZZIE. I don't know myself any more; you've mixed me all up; you think too fast for me. What's the time?

SENATOR. Eleven o'clock.

LIZZIE. Six more hours before daylight. I'll not be able to sleep tonight. [*Pause.*] The nights are hotter than the days. [*Pause.*]
What about the negro?

SENATOR. What negro? Oh! Oh, yes. They're looking for him.

LIZZIE. What will they do to him, if they catch him? [*The SENATOR shrugs his shoulders; the tumult increases. LIZZIE goes to the window.*] What's all the row about? There are men down there with torches and dogs. Is it a torchlight procession? Or is it . . . Tell me what it is, Senator! Tell me what they're doing!

SENATOR [*taking an envelope from his pocket*]. My sister asked me to give you this.

LIZZIE. She's written to me? [*She tears the envelope, takes out a hundred-dollar bill, looks in the envelope for a letter, doesn't find one, crumples the envelope and throws it away.*]

SCENE TWO

Her voice changes.] A hundred bucks. You should be delighted; your son promised me five hundred, you've saved yourself a lot of dough.

SENATOR. My dear . . .

LIZZIE. You can thank your sister. Tell her I would have preferred a lipstick, or a pair of nylons, something she'd taken the trouble to choose herself. [*She throws the note away.*] But it's the thought that counts, isn't it? [*Pause.*] You fooled me beautifully.

Pause. They look at each other. The SENATOR takes a step towards her.

SENATOR. Lizzie, let's have a little quiet chat. You're going through a moral crisis, and you need my support.

LIZZIE. What I need is a straight Scotch, but I expect we'll understand each other, you and I. [*Pause.*]

SENATOR. You know, you've got a lot of natural charm. There's something in you that all your excesses haven't spoiled. Yes. Yes. Something. [*He caresses her. She lets him, silent and scornful.*] I will come back. Don't trouble to see me out.

He goes out. LIZZIE remains rooted to the ground. But she picks up the note again, crumples it and throws it away, then sinks into a chair and bursts into tears. Outside the shouting is drawing nearer. Shots in the distance. The NEGRO comes out of hiding. He stands in front of her. She lifts her head and cries out.

LIZZIE. Ah! [*Pause.*] I was sure you'd come back. I was sure. How did you get in?

THE NEGRO. By the window.

LIZZIE. What do you want?

THE NEGRO. Hide me.

LIZZIE. I told you no.

THE NEGRO. You can hear them, mam?

LIZZIE. Yes.

THE NEGRO. That's the hunt.

LIZZIE. What hunt?

THE NEGRO. Man hunt.

LIZZIE. Ah! [*Long pause.*] You're sure they didn't see you?

THE NEGRO. Sure.

THE RESPECTABLE PROSTITUTE

LIZZIE. What will they do to you if they catch you?

THE NEGRO. Gasoline.

LIZZIE. What?

THE NEGRO. Gasoline. [*He makes an expressive gesture.*] They set fire to it.

LIZZIE. I see. Sit down. [*The NEGRO lets himself fall into a chair.*] You had to come to me. Won't I ever be through with you? [*She goes to him, almost threateningly.*] I hate trouble, understand? [*Stamping her foot.*] Hate it, hate it, hate it!

THE NEGRO. They think I done you wrong, mam.

LIZZIE. Well?

THE NEGRO. They won't look for me here.

LIZZIE. Do you know why they're hunting for you?

THE NEGRO. Because they think I done you wrong.

LIZZIE. Do you know who told them?

THE NEGRO. No.

LIZZIE. I did. [*Long pause. THE NEGRO looks at her.*] What do you think of that?

THE NEGRO. Why did you do that, mam? Oh, why did you do that?

LIZZIE. That's what I ask myself.

THE NEGRO. They'll have no mercy; they'll whip me over the eyes, they'll pour cans of gasoline over me. Oh, why did you do that? I didn't do nothing to you.

LIZZIE. Oh yes, you did. You've no idea what you've done to me! [*Pause.*] Don't you want to break my neck?

THE NEGRO. They often make folk say what they don't think.

LIZZIE. Yes. Often. And when they can't, they mix them up with their pretty stories. [*Pause.*] Well? Don't you want to break my neck? You're a good soul. [*Pause.*] I'll hide you until tomorrow night. [*He makes a movement.*] Don't touch me; I don't like black men. [*Shouts and shots nearer.*] They're getting nearer. [*She switches off the light, goes to the window, parts the curtains and looks down into the street.*] We're caught.

THE NEGRO. What are they doing?

LIZZIE. They've got sentinels at each end of the street and they're searching all the houses. You just had to come here,

SCENE TWO

didn't you? Somebody must have seen you in the street. [*She looks again.*] Now. It's our turn. They're coming upstairs.

THE NEGRO. How many of them?

LIZZIE. Five or six. The others are waiting below. [*She goes back to him.*] Don't shake like that! Christ, don't shake like that. [*Pause. She throws her bracelet on the ground and stamps on it.*] You did right to come here. [*He gets up and moves as if to go.*] Sit still. If you go out, we're done for.

THE NEGRO. The roof.

LIZZIE. With this moon? You can try if you want to be drilled full of holes. [*Pause.*] Wait. They've got two floors to search before they get here. [*Long pause. She paces up and down.*

THE NEGRO *stays huddled in his chair.*] Have you got a gun?

THE NEGRO. Oh, no!

LIZZIE. Fine. [*She goes to a suitcase and gets out a revolver.*]

THE NEGRO. What are you going to do, mam?

LIZZIE. I'm going to open the door and ask them to come in. For twenty-five years they've fooled me. White-haired mothers! Heroes! Uncle Sam and the American Nation! Now I understand. They won't catch me out again! I'll open the door, and I'll say: 'He's here. He's here, but he has done nothing. I was forced to sign a false statement. I swear by Almighty God that he didn't do anything.'

THE NEGRO. They won't believe you.

LIZZIE. Maybe. Maybe they won't believe me: then you'll aim the gun and if they don't go away, you'll fire.

THE NEGRO. Others will come.

LIZZIE. You must shoot them too. And if you see the Senator's son, try not to miss him, because he worked the whole thing. We're done for, I tell you. We're done for either way, I tell you. If they find you here, I wouldn't give a button for my skin. So we might as well die in good company. [*She holds out the revolver.*] Take it! Take it, I tell you!

THE NEGRO. I can't, mam.

LIZZIE. What?

THE NEGRO. I can't shoot a white man.

LIZZIE. They won't be so soft.

THE NEGRO. They are white folk, mam.

THE RESPECTABLE PROSTITUTE

LIZZIE. So what? Just because they're white, have they the right to hound you like a dog?

THE NEGRO. They are white folk.

LIZZIE. Hide in the bathroom.

THE NEGRO *obeys*. LIZZIE *waits*. *The bell rings. She crosses herself, picks up the bracelet and opens the door. Several MEN are there with guns.*

FIRST MAN. We're looking for the nigger.

LIZZIE. What nigger?

FIRST MAN. The one who raped a white woman in the train and slashed the Senator's nephew with a razor.

LIZZIE. You shouldn't come looking for him here. [*Pause.*] Don't you know me?

SECOND MAN. Yes. I saw you getting out of the train the day before yesterday.

LIZZIE. I'm the girl he raped, see?

Sensation. They look at her with astonishment, desire and a sort of horror. They draw back slightly. Pause. They laugh.

A MAN. Would you like to see him hang, sister?

LIZZIE. Come and fetch me when you've got him.

A MAN. Won't be long now, sugar.

ANOTHER MAN. We know he's hiding in the street.

LIZZIE. Good luck. [*They go out. She closes the door. Then she puts the revolver down on the bed.*] You can come out, now. [*THE NEGRO comes out, kneels down and kisses the hem of her dress.*] I told you not to touch me. [*She looks at him.*] You must be a funny sort of bastard to have the whole town after you.

THE NEGRO. I ain't done nothin', mam, you know that.

LIZZIE. They say a negro has always done something.

THE NEGRO. I ain't done nothin'.

LIZZIE [*she passes her hand over her forehead*]. I don't know where I am. [*Pause.*] All the same, a whole town, they can't all be wrong. . . . [*Pause.*] Damn! I don't understand any more.

THE NEGRO. It's like that, mam. It's always like that with white folk.

LIZZIE. Do you feel guilty too?

THE NEGRO. Yes, mam.

SCENE TWO

LIZZIE. And you've done nothing?

THE NEGRO. No, mam.

LIZZIE. But why is one always on their side?

THE NEGRO. They're white folk.

LIZZIE. I'm white too. [*Pause. Footsteps outside.*] It's all right. They're going away again. [*She goes to him instinctively. He is trembling, but he puts his arm round her shoulders. The steps die away. Silence. She frees herself abruptly.*] Gee! We must have looked lonely. Like a couple of orphans. [*The bell rings. They listen in silence. The bell rings again.*] Go into the bathroom. [*Someone begins to hammer on the door. THE NEGRO hides. LIZZIE opens the door. It is FRED.*] Are you crazy? Why are you banging on my door like that? No, you can't come in. [*He pushes her to one side, switches on the lights, shuts the door, and takes her by the shoulders. Long silence.*] Well?

FRED. They caught a nigger. It wasn't the right one. They lynched him all the same.

LIZZIE. So?

FRED. I was with them.

LIZZIE whistles.

LIZZIE. I see. [*Pause.*] They say it's quite something, to see a negro lynched.

FRED. I want you.

LIZZIE. What?

FRED. You're the devil! You've bewitched me. I was in the midst of them, I had my revolver in my hand, and the nigger was out on a branch. I looked at him, and thought, I want her. It isn't natural.

LIZZIE. Let me go. Let me go, I say.

FRED. What does it mean? What have you done to me, you witch? I looked at the nigger and I saw you. I saw you standing above the flames. I fired.

LIZZIE. You bastard! Let me go! Let me go! Murderer.

FRED. What have you done to me? You cling as closely as my teeth to my gums. [*Forces her on to the bed.*] I see you everywhere, I see your body, your wicked body, I feel your warmth between my hands, I have your scent in my nostrils. I've run all the way here, I didn't know if it was to kill you

THE RESPECTABLE PROSTITUTE

or take you by force. Now I know [*He lets her go abruptly and then comes back to her.*] Was it true what you said, this morning?

LIZZIE. What?

FRED. That you liked me?

LIZZIE. Leave me alone.

FRED. Swear that it's true. Swear! [*He twists her wrist. Cry. There is a noise in the bathroom.*] What is it? [*He listens.*] There's someone here.

LIZZIE. You're crazy. There's no one.

FRED. Yes, there is. In the bathroom. [*He goes towards it.*]

LIZZIE. You can't go in there.

FRED. Of course there's someone.

LIZZIE. It's a client. A guy with dough.

FRED. A client? You'll have no more clients. Never. You're mine. [*Pause.*] I'd like to see him. [*He shouts.*] Come out of there!

LIZZIE [*shouting*]. Don't come out. It's a trap.

FRED. Come out of there. [*He pushes her violently away, goes to the door and opens it. THE NEGRO comes out.*] Is this your client?

LIZZIE. Don't fire. You know he's innocent.

FRED *pulls out his gun. Suddenly THE NEGRO springs forward, pushes him aside and runs away. FRED goes after him. LIZZIE goes to the door through which they have disappeared and begins to shout.*

LIZZIE. He's innocent! Innocent! [*Two shots. She turns, her face set and hard. She goes to the table, takes up the revolver. FRED comes back. She turns towards him, back to the audience, holding her gun behind her back. He throws his on the table.*] Did you get him? [*FRED does not answer.*] Fine. Well, now it's your turn. [*She aims the revolver at him.*]

FRED. Lizzie! Think of my mother.

LIZZIE. To hell with your mother! I've been had that way already.

FRED [*walking slowly towards her*]. The first Clarke cleared a forest with his own hands: he shot sixteen Indians before being killed himself in an ambush. His son built nearly the whole of this town; he was Washington's friend and died

SCENE TWO

at Yorktown, fighting for the independence of the United States. My great-grandfather was a Vigilante in San Francisco; he saved twenty-two lives during the great fire. My grandfather came to live here; he dug a canal to the Mississippi and was Governor of the state. My father is a senator; I shall be a senator after him; I am his only male heir and the last of my name. We have made this country and its story is our story. There have been Clarkes in Alaska, in the Philippines, in New Mexico. Dare you shoot the whole of America?

LIZZIE. If you come closer, I fire!

FRED. Fire! Fire! You see, you cannot. A girl like you cannot kill a man like me. Who are you? What can you do? Do you even know your grandfather's name? I have the right to live: there are so many things to do, waiting for me to do them. Give me that gun.

She gives it to him. He puts it in his pocket.

FRED. The nigger ran too fast; I missed him. [*Pause. He puts his arm round her shoulders.*] I'll buy you a house up on the hill, on the other side of the river, a fine house with a garden. You can walk in the garden, but I forbid you to go out; I'm very jealous. I'll come and see you three times a week, in the evening; Tuesdays, Thursdays and week-ends. You'll have coloured servants and more money than you ever dreamed of, but you must do everything I want. And I want plenty! [*She lets herself relax a little in his arms.*] Did you really like me? Tell me. Did you?

LIZZIE [*drowsily*]. Yes, I did.

FRED [*tapping her cheek*]. Then everything's fine. [*Pause.*] You can call me Fred.

CURTAIN

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